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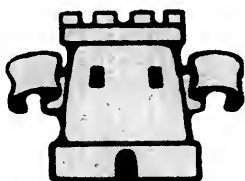
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Ekkehard Vol. II



VIKTOR VON SCHEFFEL

EKKEHARD

VOLUME II

TRANSLATED FROM
THE GERMAN



WITH FRONTISPIECE

P. F. COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK

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EKKEHARD

VOLUME TWO

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CHAPTER XV

HADUMOTH

THE night, which had appeared long and dreary to those who had been entrusted with the watch on the battlefield, was passing away. The horror of Death lay over the whole valley. "The Lord be merciful unto their souls," sounded the low-voiced call of the watchman. "And deliver them from the sufferings of purgatory, Amen!" was the response of his companions, who were cowering round a camp-fire on the border of the pine-wood. The deep black shadows of night lay over the bodies of the slain, as if the heavens compassionately wished to hide what human hands had done there. At dawn of day, even the clouds disappeared, as if they also were driven away by the horror of the sight beneath them; others came, and likewise fled, ever changing their shapes and forms, losing one to assume another. Everything is restless, except in Death, where eternal rest is found. Friend and enemy,

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lay there side by side, as they had fallen, still and calm.

One slight figure like that of a child the watchman saw gliding over the battlefield. It bent down, walked on, and bent down again, and ever continued its search; but he dared not call to it. He stood like one spellbound. "Probably it is the angel who is marking their foreheads with a letter, so that they can be recognized when the spirit will return to their bodies on the day of resurrection," thought he, remembering the words of the prophet. Silently he crossed himself, and when he looked again the figure had vanished.

The morning dawned, and there came a number of men to relieve the monks. The Duchess had sent them, although Simon Bardo was not quite satisfied with this arrangement. "A victory is but half a victory if it is not followed up by pursuit of the enemy. We ought to go after them until the last of them are annihilated," he said. But the monks insisted on their return on account of the Easter holidays, and the others said: "Before we could catch those, on their swift horses, we should have far to go. They have come to us, and we have beaten them, and if they should come again we have more blows in store for them; after yesterday's work we deserve rest."

Then it was determined that the dead should be buried before the break of Easter Sunday.

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So the men fetched their spades and hoes, and dug two wide graves. On one side of the field there was an abandoned gravel-pit, which they widened into a spacious resting-place. This last was destined for the dead Huns. Arms and harnesses were taken off and collected, forming a considerable heap in all. Then the corpses were thrown down, one after the other, as they were brought. It was a mass of torn members, repulsive to the eye, men and horses in wild confusion—like the rebellious host of angels falling down into hell.

The pit was filled. One of the grave-diggers came and brought a solitary head with cleft forehead and fierce expression. "Most likely that belongs also to the heathens, and may look for its trunk below," quoth he, throwing it down into the pit.

When the whole field had been searched, without their discovering any more Hunnic bodies, they covered up the huge grave. It was a burial without a ceremony; sundry curses instead of blessings were called down, and ravens and other birds of prey, hoarsely screeching, fluttered about in great numbers. Those which inhabited the rocks on the Hohenkrähen, and the dark pine wood beneath, had all come, Moengal's hawk among them; and they were evidently protesting by their cries against thus losing their rightful prey. With a hollow sound the clods of earth and pebbles fell

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into the wide grave. Then the deacon of Singen came, with the vase of consecrated water, with which he sprinkled the mound, in order to banish the demons, and keep down the dead who rested in the stranger earth. A weather-beaten piece of rock, which had some time since fallen down from the Hohentwiel, was finally rolled on to the Hunnic grave, and then they went away shivering to get the second tomb ready, which was to receive their own dead. All those who had belonged to the ecclesiastical state were to be buried in the cloister church at Reichenau.

At the same hour in which the battle had begun the day before, a solemn procession descended from the Hohentwiel. These were the men who had won the battle. They advanced in the same order as on the day before, but their gait was slow, and their standard was muffled in black crape. On the watch-tower of the castle the black flag had likewise been hoisted. The Duchess also rode with the train, dressed in dark sober-colored garments, which gave an unusually serious and severe expression to her face. The dead monks were carried on biers to the brink of the great tomb, so that they should participate in the last homage rendered to their fellow-champions. When the last notes of the litany had died away, Abbot Wazmann approached the open grave, pronouncing the farewell greeting and offering up the thanks of the

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survivors to the ninety-six who lay there so pale and still, side by side.

"Blessed be their memory, and may their remains rest in peace until the day of resurrection! May their names descend unto posterity, and may the glory of the holy champions bring down a blessing on their children!" Thus he spoke in the words of the Preacher, throwing down the first handful of earth when he had ended, the Duchess, as well as the others, following his example one by one. After this there ensued a solemn silence, as all those who had fought together on the day before were to separate again after the funeral; and many a hard-featured face waxed soft; and many an embrace and hearty shake of the hand were exchanged at parting.

Those of the Reichenau were the first who set out for their monastery. The biers with the dead were carried along, the brothers walking by their sides, bearing lighted tapers and chanting psalms. The corpse of the old man from the Pagan's Cave, long weary of life, they had also taken along with them. With bent-down head, the war-horse of the unknown warrior, covered with a black cloth, walked by its side. It was a gloomy and sad spectacle withal to see the long funeral train slowly enter the pine wood, and then disappear amid the gloom.

The next to take leave of the Duchess were the

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remaining vassals. The gaunt Friedinger, with his arm in a sling, rode down the valley at the head of a troop. Only a few select soldiers, under the Knight of Randegg, were to be garrisoned on the Hohentwiel.

With unfeigned emotion Dame Hadwig followed the departing ones with her eyes and then slowly rode over the battle-field. The day before she had stood on the tower, anxiously watching the turn the battle was taking.

Master Spazzo was now called upon to explain a good many things, and although he evidently did not shrink from exaggerating a little here and there, the Duchess seemed well satisfied. She did not speak to Ekkehard.

When she too had returned home, the plain became silent and forsaken again, as if nothing at all had happened there. Only the trampled grass, the wet, reddish earth, and the two huge tombs, bore witness to the harvest which Death had held there but the day before. It was not long before the blood was dried up, and the grass had grown afresh. The mounds under which the dead rested were soon covered with moss and creepers. Wind and birds had carried seeds there, and bushes and trees had sprung up in rich luxuriance—for plants thrive well where the dead are buried. But the tale of the battle with the Huns is still living in the memory of the present generation. The piece of

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rock which had been rolled upon the grave is called the "Heathen Buck" by the inhabitants of the Hegau, and on the night of Good Friday there is nobody who would like to pass the valley. On that night earth and air belong to the dead, who are then supposed to arise from their graves. Then the small, swift-footed horses dart about again; the dark columns of the Christian champions on foot eagerly press forward, the armor glittering from under the decayed habits of the monks. The clatter of arms and wild war-cries rise louder than the tempest, and fiercely rages the battle of the spirits in the air, when suddenly from yonder island in the lake a mounted knight in shining gilt armor, mounted on a black steed, comes hurrying along, and drives them all back into their cool resting-places. Vainly the Hunnic chieftain tries to resist him, angrily lifting his crooked sword; but at that moment the heavy battle-ax descends on his head—and he must go down like the rest. And everything is silent as before; only the young leaves of the tender birch tree are trembling in the wind. . . .

Easter Sunday passed drearily and sadly. In the evening Dame Hadwig sat in the hall, with Ekkehard, Master Spazzo, the chamberlain, and the Knight of Randegg. It can be easily imagined what their talk was about. The great events of the past days found an echo in all their thoughts

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and speeches like to the echo of the Lorelei rock in the Rhine: scarcely has the first tone died away in one place, when a hollow, rolling sound takes it up again in the next, and so it goes on, reverberating from all sides, as if it were never going to end.

The Abbot of Reichenau had sent a messenger to report that they had found the monastery but slightly damaged and unharmed by fire. Further, that they had destroyed all traces of the Huns by carrying the holy relics about and by the sprinkling of consecrated water everywhere; and finally that the dead had been buried.

"And what became of the brother who stayed behind?" asked the Duchess.

"The Lord our God has shown that in His mercy He does not forget poor, childish minds in the midst of danger and peril. On our return he stood on the threshold, as if nothing whatever had happened to him. 'Well, how didst thou like the Huns?' one of us called out to him, upon which he said with his customary smile: 'Oh, very much indeed. Never have I seen such jolly fellows before; and as for eating and drinking, they are wonderfully considerate! Our father cellarer never took the slightest notice of my being thirsty; but *they* gave me wine as much as I wanted, and if they dealt me sundry blows and boxes on the ear, they made it up again with the wine; and that is more than any of you would ever have done. Only discipline

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was wanting, and besides they have not yet learned how to behave in church.' He might say still many a thing in praise of his strange hosts, but this, Heribald added, he would only reveal under the seal of confession."

Dame Hadwig graciously dismissed the messenger, giving him the finely wrought coat-of-mail of the slain Hunnic chieftain, in order that it might be hung up in the cloister church as a lasting token of the past battle. The duty of distributing the booty had been delegated to her, according to the general desire.

Master Spazzo, whose tongue had not been lazy all this time in recounting his warlike deeds—and the number of the Huns he had slain increased with every recital, like a falling avalanche—now said with pride: "I have still got a war-trophy to present, which I have destined for my gracious mistress herself."

He then went down to the under apartments, in one of which Cappan, his prisoner, lay on a bundle of straw. His wound had been dressed, and had proved not to be dangerous. "Get up, thou son of the Devil!" cried Master Spazzo, adding a rude kick to this invitation. The Hun rose, his face wearing a somewhat dubious expression, as if he did not believe that his life was to last much longer. Thus he limped through the room, leaning on a stick. "Forward!" said Master

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Spazzo, indicating the direction in which he was to go. So they went upstairs and entered the hall. Here an imperious "Stop," from Master Spazzo, made the unfortunate wretch stand still, casting his eyes around with evident surprise.

With kindly interest Dame Hadwig looked at the strange specimen of humanity before her. Praxedis also had come near, and turning to Master Spazzo said: "One can not say much for the beauty of your war trophy, but it is curious enough."

The Duchess folded her hands: "And this is the nation before which the German empire has trembled!" exclaimed she.

"The terror was caused by the multitude, and their always keeping together," said the Knight of Randegg. "They won't come back again so easily, that's sure!"

"Are you so very certain of that?" asked she, pointedly.

The Hun did not understand much of the conversation. His wounded foot hurt him, but he did not dare to sit down. Praxedis addressed him in Greek, but he shyly shook his head. Then she tried to get up an understanding by dint of signs and nods, but this too was in vain. "Allow me," said she to the Duchess, "I still know of a way to make him give us a sign of life, which I have heard of at Constantinople." Gliding out of the hall, she presently returned, carrying a cup, which

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she presented with mock deference to the dumb prisoner. It was a strong liquor, distilled from cherries and plums, such as the late castle-chaplain had loved to concoct now and then. At the sight of this, the Hun's face became radiant; his blunt nose sniffed up the rising aroma, and emptying the cup, which he evidently regarded as a sign of peace, he threw himself down with crossed arms before Praxedis, and kissed her shoe.

She made him a sign that the homage was due to the Duchess, upon which he wanted to repeat his thanks to her; but Dame Hadwig stepped back, and beckoned to Master Spazzo to take his prisoner away again.

"You have queer fancies," said she to him, when he had returned; "however, it was gallant of you, to think of me even in battle."

Meanwhile, Ekkehard had been silently sitting at the window, looking out over the country. Master Spazzo's ways annoyed him, and even Praxedis's jokes had hurt his feelings. "In order to humiliate us," thought he, "the Lord has sent over the children of the desert, to be a warning to us, and to teach us, even on the ruins of that which is perishable, to think of that which is eternal; the earth which covers the bodies of the slain is still fresh, and those left behind are already jesting, as if all had been but an empty dream."

Praxedis had approached him, and now play-

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fully said: "Why did not you likewise bring home some keepsake from the battle, Professor? A wonderful Hunnic amazon is said to have skirmished about there, and if you had caught her we should now have a nice pair of them."

"Ekkehard had to think of higher things than Hunnic women," said the Duchess bitterly, "and he knows how to be silent, as one who has taken a vow for that purpose. Why should we need to know how *he* fared in battle!"

This cutting speech deeply wounded the serious-minded man. A jest at the wrong moment falls like vinegar on honey. Silently he walked out to fetch Sir Burkhard's sword, and drawing it out of the scabbard, he laid it on the table before the Duchess. Fresh, red spots were still glistening on the noble blade, and the edge showed many a new notch, here and there. "Whether the school-master was idle all the time, this sword may bear witness! I have not made my tongue the herald of my deeds!"

The Duchess was startled. She still bore him a grudge in her heart, and she was sorely tempted to give it vent in an angry outburst. But the sword of Sir Burkhard called up manifold thoughts. So, restraining her passion, she held out her hand to Ekkehard. "I did not wish to offend you," said she.

The mildness of her voice was like a reproach to him, and he hesitated to take the proffered

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hand. He almost wanted to ask her pardon for his roughness, but the words clove to his tongue, and at that moment the door opened, so that he was spared the rest.

Hadumoth, the little goose-driver, came in. Shyly she halted at the door, not venturing to speak. Her face, which was pale from want of sleep, bore the traces of recent tears.

"What is the matter with thee, my poor child?" called out Dame Hadwig; "come hither!"

Then the little maiden came forward, and kissed the Duchess's hand. She tried to speak, but violent sobs prevented her.

"Don't be afraid," said the Duchess, soothingly; upon which the little girl found words and said: "I can not take care of the geese any more; I must go away, and thou must give me a gold piece as big as thou hast got. I can not help it, but I must go!"

"And why must thou go, my child?" asked the Duchess. "Has any one wronged thee?"

"He has not come home again!"

"There are many who have not come home again; but thou must not go away on that account. Those who have fallen, are now with our dear Lord in heaven. They are in a large, beautiful garden, and are much happier than we are."

But Hadumoth, shaking her young little head, said: "Audifax is not with God; he is with the Huns. I have searched for him down in the val-

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ley, and he was not among the dead men. Besides, the charcoal-burner's boy from Hohenstoffeln, who also went out with the archers, saw himself how he was taken prisoner. I must go to fetch him. I shall find no peace if I don't!"

"But how wilt thou find him?"

"That I don't know. I shall go where the others went. They say that the world is very wide, but in the end I shall find him. I feel sure of it. The gold piece which thou art to give me, I will give to the Huns and say, 'Let me have Audifax for this'; and when I have got him, we shall both come home again."

Dame Hadwig delighted in all that was unusual. "We might all learn something from that child," she said, lifting up the shy little Hadumoth to imprint a kiss on her forehead. "God is with thee, without thy knowing it. Therefore, thy thoughts are great and bold. Who among you has a gold coin?"

The Knight of Randegg fetched one out of the depth of his pocket. It was a large golden Thaler, on one side of which could be seen the Emperor Charles with a stern face and wide open eyes, and on the other a crowned female head. "It's my last," said he laughingly, handing it to Praxedis. The Duchess then gave it to the child. "Go, then, with the Lord; it is a decree of Providence."

All were deeply touched, and Ekkehard put his

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hands on the little maiden's head, as if to bless her. "I thank you!" said she, turning to go; then once more looking round, added: "But if they will not let me have Audifax for one gold piece only?"

"Then I will give thee another," said the Duchess.

Upon this, the child, full of confidence, walked away.

And Hadumoth really went out into the unknown world with the gold piece sewed up in her bodice, her pocket filled with bread, and the staff which Audifax had once cut for her from the dark green holly bush in her hand. That she did not know the way, and that her finding food and a shelter for the night were doubtful, she had not time to trouble herself about. The Huns have gone away toward the setting sun, and have taken him with them, was her sole thought. The flowing Rhine and the setting sun were her only sign-posts, and Audifax was her goal.

By and by the scenery became strange to her; the Bodensee looking smaller and narrower in the distance, and foreign hills rose before her, hiding the familiar shape of the hill which was her home. More than once did she look back, until she had caught the last glimpse of the Hohentwiel, with its walls and towers steeped in dark blue shadows. Then she entered an unknown valley, grown with dark pine woods, under the shade of which low,

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straw-thatched cottages lay hidden. Nodding a last good-by to her Hegau mountains, Hadumoth walked on undauntedly.

When the sun had gone down to his rest behind the pine woods, she stopped a while. "Now they are ringing the bell for evening prayer at home," said she. "I will pray also." So she knelt down in the woody solitude and prayed; first for Audifax, then for the Duchess, and finally for herself. Everything was silent around her. She heard only her own fast-beating heart.

"What will become of my poor geese?" thought she next, rising from her knees; "'tis now the hour to drive them home." Then Audifax, with whom she had so often returned home of an evening, rose again before her mind and she hurried on.

In the different farmyards which she passed in the valley, not a soul was stirring; only before one little straw-thatched cottage an old woman was sitting. "Thou must take me in for the night, grandmother," said Hadumoth, coaxingly; but except a sign that she could remain, she received no answer whatever, for the old woman was deaf. When the people fled up into the mountains on account of the Huns, she alone remained behind.

Before the day had fully dawned, Hadumoth had already set out again on her journey. Her road now took her through extensive woods, in which the fir trees seemed never to come to an

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end. Here, the first soft touches of spring were already visible. The first flowers were peeping out from the moss; and the first beetles hovered above them, softly humming; and the delicious smell of the pine trees scented the air everywhere, as if it were incense which the trees sent up to the sun, to show their gratitude for all that his rays had called up into life around them.

The little maiden, however, was not satisfied. "Here it is far too beautiful for the Huns to be," said she to herself. So, at the first opportunity which offered itself, she turned her back on the mountains, and soon came to an opening in the wood, which afforded a considerable view. Far down in the distance, the Rhine was winding along like a serpent. Jammed in between its dividing arms was an island, bearing many a stately tower and wall, as if belonging to a monastery; but Hadumoth's sharp eyes discerned that the walls were blackened and spotted, and the roofs all destroyed. A dark-blue cloud of smoke hung heavily over it.

"What do they call this district?" asked she of a man, who was just then emerging from the wood.

"The Black Forest," was the answer.

"And over there?"

"The Rheingau."

"The Huns must have been there!"

"The day before yesterday."

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“And where are they now?”

The man, leaning on his staff gave a sharp look at the child, and pointing down the Rhine, said: “And why dost thou ask?”

“Because I wish to go to them.” Upon this he lifted his staff and walked on, murmuring, “Holy Fintan, pray for us!”

Hadumoth also walked on again. She had noticed from the height that the Rhine was flowing onward in large circuits; so she cut across the mountains, thus to get the start on the Huns. Two days she thus wandered on, sleeping in the open air, on the mossy ground, and scarcely meeting a human being all the time. She had to cross many a wild ravine and swift-flowing mountain torrent, as well as mighty old pine trees which the storm had uprooted. On the same place where they had once stretched their tops toward the sky, they now lay to rot and decay, emitting a weird, grayish light at night; but in spite of all terrors and difficulties, she never once lost courage.

At last the mountains became less steep, flattening down into an elevated plain, over which the rough winds could sweep at their leisure; and in the crevices of which the snow was still lying.

The last piece of bread had been eaten, when from another hill she again caught sight of the Rhine. So she now turned to walk toward it, until she came to a narrow chasm, in the depth of which

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a foaming mountain-torrent dashed along. A dense mass of brambles and other thorny bushes grew on the sides of the steep descent, but Hadumoth bravely made a passage through them, though this cost her no small amount of pain and weariness. The sun was high in the heavens, and the thorns ever and anon caught hold of her dress; but whenever her feet grew weary and unwilling to go on, she said, "Audifax!" and lifted them up again.

At last she had come to the bottom, and was standing at the foot of dark rocky walls, through which the waters had made a passage, falling down in a bright, sparkling cascade. The old-looking stones, on which reddish moss was growing, glistened and shone like burnished gold through the glittering waves which rose up against them, alternately covering them up, until they arrested their mad course, a little lower down, in a dark green, transparent little pond, like to a life-weary man going to rest and looking back in quiet contemplation on the frolics and extravagances of his past life. Luxurious, broad-leafed plants grew around it, on which the spray lay like sparkling dewdrops, while blue-winged dragon-flies hovered above them, as if they were the spirits of dead flowers.

Dreamily the melodious rustling of the waters crept into the heart of the hungry child. With that brook she must go on, to the Rhine. Every-

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thing was wild and entangled, as if never a human being had broken in upon that solitude. And now a dry, green little nook looked invitingly over at Hadumoth; and she followed the invitation, and lay down there. The air was so cool and fresh, and the brook rustled and murmured on, until it had lulled her to sleep. She lay with her head resting on an outstretched arm, a smile playing on her tired countenance. She was dreaming. Of whom? The blue dragon-flies betrayed nothing.

A slight sprinkling of water awoke her from her dreams, and when she slowly opened her eyes, a man with a long beard, dressed in a coarse linen suit, and with legs bared to the knees, stood before her. Some fishing-tackle, a net, and a wooden tub, in which blue-spotted trout were swimming, lay in the grass beside him. He had thus stood for a considerable time, watching the little sleeper, and doubting whether she were a human child he sprinkled some water on her, to wake her.

"Where am I?" asked Hadumoth, fearlessly.

"At the waterfall of Wieladingen," replied the fisherman, "and this water, which contains plenty of fine salmon, is called the Murg, and goes into the Rhine. But whence dost thou come, little maiden? Hast thou dropped from the sky?"

"I come from far away, and where I live the hills are quite different from here. With us, they grow quite straight out of the plain, each one stand-

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ing alone, and the salmon swim about in the lake, and are much bigger. Hegau, our land is called."

The fisherman shook his head. "That must be a good way off. And where art thou going to?"

"To the Huns," replied Hadumoth; and then she told him why she had gone out into the world, and for whom she was searching.

Upon this the fisherman shook his head again, with redoubled energy. "By the life of my mother!" exclaimed he, "that is an adventurous expedition!" But Hadumoth, folding her hands pleadingly, said: "Fisherman, thou must show me the way to find them."

Then the long-bearded man was touched. "If it must be, then come along," grumbled he. "They are not very far off." Gathering up his fishing-tackle, he followed the course of the brook, accompanied by the little maiden. Whenever the trees and bushes became too much entangled, or when bits of rocks blocked up the way, he took her up in his arms, and carried her through the foaming waters. After leaving the ravine to their right, they soon came to the spur of a hill, at the foot of which the Rhine flowed.

"Look there, child," said he, pointing across the river to a low mountain tract. "Over there, you get into the Frick valley at the foot of the Bötzenberg. There they pitched their camp, after burning the castle of Laufenburg yesterday. But

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farther than this the murderous incendiaries shall not advance," added he, fiercely.

After walking on for a while Hadumoth's guide stopped before a projecting rock. "Wait a bit," said he. He then took up some logs of dry fir wood that lay about, and heaped them up into a pile, putting some smaller branches of resinous pine wood between. He did not light it, though. The same thing he did again in sundry other places. Hadumoth looked on, but could not guess why he was doing this. At last they descended to the banks of the Rhine.

"Art thou really in earnest about the Huns?" asked he once more.

"Yes," said Hadumoth. Upon this he loosened a small canoe, which had been hidden in the bushes, and rowed her across. On the other side they came right into a wood, which the man entered, always looking carefully about. Here also were piles of wood mixed with resin and covered with green branches. Nodding with satisfaction he returned to Hadumoth. "Farther than this I can not accompany thee; for yonder is the Frick valley and the Hunnic camp. Take care that they give thee that boy at once; better to-day than to-morrow. It might otherwise be too late. And so, may God protect thee! Thou art a brave child."

"I thank thee," said Hadumoth, pressing his horny hand. "But why dost not come with me?"

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"I shall come later," replied the fisherman with a significant look, stepping back into his canoe.

At the entrance of the valley was the Hunnic camp, consisting of some tents and a few larger huts made of branches and straw. The horses were lodged in blockhouses of pine logs. At the back was a mountain, while in front they had dug a trench, fortified by a kind of palisade made with paling and pieces of rock in the genuine Hunnic fashion. Their sentinels rode up and down, covering a considerable radius. The reason of their having settled down there for a while was partly their needing some rest after their late exploits, and partly an intended attack on the convent of St. Fridolin, in that neighborhood. Some of their men were building ships and rafts on the Rhine.

In his tent lay Hornebog, who was now sole leader since Ellak's death; but in spite of all the cushions and carpets heaped up there, he could find no rest. Erica, the Flower-of-the-heath, was sitting by his side, playing with a golden bauble, which she wore round her neck on a silk ribbon.

"I don't know why," said Hornebog to her, "but things have become very uncomfortable. Those bald-headed monks have dealt us a rather heavy blow. We must not be quite so rash in future. Neither do I feel quite at my ease here, for it is too still, and a calm generally precedes a storm. With thee, too, everything is changed since Ellak

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was killed. Thou shouldst love me now, as thou didst him, when he was the first leader; but thou art like a burned-out fire."

Erica pulled away the jewel with a jerk, so that it rebounded on her bosom with a metallic ring, and softly hummed some Hunnic melody. Then there entered one of the Hunnic sentinels, accompanied by Hadumoth and Snewelin of Ellwangen as interpreter. The child had entered the camp, bravely passing the posts and not heeding their calls until they stopped her. Snewelin then explained Hadumoth's wish with regard to the boy prisoner. He was in as soft and compassionate a mood as if he were still in his home, and about to celebrate Ash Wednesday, for he had summed up that day all the misdeeds which he had committed in the course of his Hunnic life; and the pillaged convents began to weigh on his conscience.

"Tell them also that I can pay them a ransom," said Hadumoth, undoing the seam of her bodice to get at the gold piece. She handed it to the chieftain, who laughed immoderately, joined by Erica.

"What a crazy land!" exclaimed Hornebog, when his laughter had subsided. "The men cut off their hair, and the children do what would honor a warrior. If instead of this little maiden the armed men from the lake had followed us, it would have put us into an awkward position."

A sudden suspicion now crossing his mind, he

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cast a searching look at the child. "Suppose she were a spy!" exclaimed he. But Erica now rose and patted Hadumoth's head. "Thou shalt stay with me," said she, "for I want something to play with, since my black horse is dead and my Ellak is dead."

"Take the brat away!" Hornebog now called out angrily. "Have we come here to play with children?" Then Erica saw that a storm was brewing in the chieftain's bosom, and, taking the little maiden by the hand, led her out.

There where the camp receded toward the mountain, between some sheltering pieces of rock, a temporary cooking-place had been erected, which was the undisputed realm of the woman of the wood. Audifax was kneeling before the biggest of the kettles, blowing into the fire, in which the soup destined for the evening meal was boiling. But now he jumped up and gave a loud shriek, for he had beheld his little friend. Instantly the old hag stretched out her head from behind the other kettle, and this was more than a warning. Without moving, he stirred the soup with a peeled branch, as was his prescribed task. Thus he stood, the image of dumb grief. He had become pale and haggard; and his eyes dimmed by the tears which had touched nobody. "Mind that thou dost not hurt the children, old baboon!" cried Erica.

Then Hadumoth went over to where the boy

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was, who now dropped his primitive spoon, and silently held out his hand to her; but out of his dark blue eyes there came a look which told its own story of woe and suffering, and the longing to regain his liberty. Hadumoth likewise stood quietly before him. She had often imagined a joyous and touching meeting, but all these pictures had faded away now. The greatest joy sends its gratitude up to heaven in a voiceless prayer.

"Give me a dish of soup, Audifax," said she; "I am very hungry."

The woman of the wood allowed him to pour out some soup for her into a wooden plate, which the hungry child eagerly took. When she had stilled her craving for food, her spirits rose again, and she fearlessly gazed on the wild faces of the Hunnic riders who came to fetch their soup. Afterward she sat down close beside Audifax. He was still silent and reserved, and only when it became dark and his tyrant went away his tongue got loosened. "Oh, I have so much to tell thee, Hadumoth!" whispered he. "I know where the treasure of the Huns is! The woman of the wood has got it in her keeping. Two big boxes stand under her couch in yonder hut. I have looked into them myself, and they were quite full of jewels and ornaments and golden trinkets. A silver hen with a brood of chickens and eggs is also among them, which they stole in Lombardy—and

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many more beautiful things. I have paid dearly for seeing them though. . . ."

He lifted up his leathern hat. One-half of his right ear had been cut off.

" . . . The woman of the wood came home before I could close the lid again. 'Take that, for thy reward,' said she, lifting her scissors up to my ear. It has hurt me a good deal, Hadumoth; but I shall pay her back some day!"

"I will help thee," said his companion.

For a long time the two whispered on together; for no sleep came to the eyes of the happy pair. The noise in the camp was hushed now, and the shadows of night brooded over the valley. Then Hadumoth said: "I must ever and again think of that night when the stars fell down." Audifax, heaving a sigh, murmured: "Ah, I shall still get my treasure. I know I shall." And again they sat quietly together for a while, until Audifax gave a violent start. Hadumoth could feel the trembling of his hand. On the other side of the Rhine, on the summit of the black-looking mountains, a sudden light shone out. It was like a torch swung around, and then thrown away.

"There, it's gone again!" Audifax said softly.

"Ah, but look there!" exclaimed the frightened Hadumoth, pointing behind her.

From the height of the Bötzenberg another flame darted up, likewise describing a fiery circuit in

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the air. It was the same signal. And yonder, over in the region of the Black Forest, at the same place where the burning torch had first been visible, there now arose a mighty flame, lighting up the dark, starless night. The guard in the valley uttered a piercing whistle, and the inhabitants of the camp began to stir everywhere. The woman of the wood came back also, and threateningly called out, "What art thou dreaming about, boy? Quick, put the nags to the cart, and saddle my sumpter-horse!"

Audifax silently obeyed her orders.

The cart stood ready, and the sumpter-horse was tied to a stake. Carefully the old woman approached it with two baskets, which she hung over its back, and then, taking out the two boxes from her hut, she put one in each, afterward covering them up with hay. When she had done this she peered out anxiously into the darkness. All was quiet again. The wine of the Frick valley had ensured a sound sleep to the Hunnic warriors.

"'Tis nothing," muttered the woman of the wood, "we can take the horses back again;" but the next moment she started up, almost blinded. The mountains rising behind the camp had suddenly become alive with hundreds of torches and firebrands; and from all sides there resounded a loud and terrific cry of battle. From the Rhine dark masses of armed men were swiftly approach-

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ing; on all the mountain summits tremendous bonfires were burning. Up now, ye sleepers! But it was too late, for already the firebrands came flying into the Hunnic camp. Pitiful sounded the frightened neighing of the horses, whose large shed was already burning. Dark figures stormed the camp on all sides. This time King Death was coming with blazing torchlight, and he who brought him was the old Knight Irminger, the owner of the Frickgau: he, the strong father of six strong sons, who, like Mattathias with his Maccabees, could no longer bear to behold the misery of his people. And with them there came the men of Hornussen and Herznach; men from the Aarthal and Brugg, as well as from Baden's hot wells; and others from the far-off Gieselafluth. Safely hidden in the dark pine wood, they had waited until the torch was lifted up on the Eggberg, assuring them of the neighborly help of the people in the Black Forest; and then they rushed to the attack. With bleeding head, Snewelin galloped past. A well-aimed firebrand had stuck to his garments, setting them all ablaze, so that he looked like a fiery phantom. "The world is coming to an end," cried he. "The last day is at hand! May God have mercy on my poor soul!"

"Lost, everything lost," muttered the woman of the wood, lifting her hand up to her forehead. Then she untied the sumpter-horse, to harness it

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likewise before her cart. Meanwhile Audifax was standing in the dark, biting his lips that he might not scream out with delight at this unexpected turn of affairs. A trembling reflection of the flames played on his excited countenance. Everything was boiling within him. For some time he stood there, gazing fixedly at the tumult and the fighting of the dark figures before him. "Now I know what I must do," whispered he into Hadumoth's ear. He had taken up a big stone, and springing up at the woman of the wood with the agility of a wild-cat, he struck her down. After this he quickly pulled away the sumpter-horse, upon the saddle of which he placed the trembling Hadumoth with the sudden strength of a man. "Take hold of the pommel!" cried he. Then jumping up himself, he seized the reins, and the horse no sooner felt the unwonted burden than it galloped off into the night, frightened by the glare and noise around. Audifax never wavered, though his heart was beating wildly. The blinding smoke made him shut his eyes as thus they sped onward over the corpses of the dead, and through the crowds of fighting men. After a while the noise became fainter in the distance, and the horse began to slacken its pace. It was taking the children toward the Rhine. They were saved!

Thus they rode on through the long, dark night, scarcely once daring to look about them. Audifax

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silently held the reins, feeling as if he were in a dream. First he put his hand on Hadumoth's head, and then struck against one of the boxes, which, emitting a metallic ring, convinced him that he was not dreaming after all. The horse was good-tempered, and carried its burden willingly enough, across fields, over heaths and through dark woods, always in the direction of the Rhine. When they had thus ridden on for a considerable time, a cool breeze, the messenger of the coming dawn, made them shiver. Hadumoth opened her eyes. "Where are we?" asked she.

"I don't know," replied Audifax. And now a roaring and rushing, like distant thunder, struck their ear; but it could not be from a coming storm, as the sky brightened, while the little stars waxed dimmer and slowly vanished. The noise became louder and nearer. They passed a stately castle, looking down proudly into the waters below. Then their path took them round a little hill, and then they suddenly beheld the broad flood of the Rhine, dashing along with a thundering noise, over dark, weather-beaten rocks. Clouds of pearly white spray glistened in the air, while soft mists hung around everywhere. The horse stopped, as if it wanted to take in the grand spectacle at its leisure. Then Audifax jumped to the ground, and taking down the tired little Hadumoth, as well as the two baskets, he allowed the good animal to graze.

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So the two children stood before the falls of the Rhine, Hadumoth tightly grasping her companion's right hand with her left, gazing long and silently at the spectacle before them. Presently, the sun cast his first rays on the dashing waters, which caught them and built them up into a glittering, many-colored rainbow.

Then Audifax went up to the baskets to take out one of the boxes, which, on being opened, disclosed its glistening contents of pure gold and silver. The long-coveted treasure was found at last, had become his own, not by spells and nightly conjurations, but by the use of his hands and by seizing a favorable opportunity. Thus he gazed on the shining baubles without any surprise, for had he not known for many months that such a treasure was destined for him?

Of every kind of article it contained he picked out one—a casket, a ring, a coin, and a bracelet, and with them approached the brink of the waters.

“Hadumoth,” said he, “here I think that God must be; for His rainbow is hovering over the waters. I will make Him a thankoffering.”

Stepping on a projecting rock, he flung in with a strong hand first the casket, then the ring, coin, and bracelet, and then kneeling down, Hadumoth kneeling by his side, they prayed for a long time, and thanked God.

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CHAPTER XVI

CAPPAN GETS MARRIED

WHEN a thunderstorm has blown over, the brooks are still turbid and muddy; and so a great stirring event is generally followed by petty, irksome tasks, until everything has returned to its old routine.

This experience Dame Hadwig was forced to make also. There was a great deal to arrange and put in order, after the driving away of the Huns; but this she did willingly enough, as her lively spirit and the pleasure she took in active superintendence quite made up for the trouble it gave her.

The widows and orphans of the slain vassals, as well as all those whose houses had been burned, and whose harvests had been destroyed, came to sue for assistance. Help was given to every one, as far as this was possible. Messengers were sent off to the Emperor to report what had happened, as well as to make proposals for taking the necessary precautions against any possible future invasion. Wherever the fortress was found deficient, improvements were made; the booty was distributed, and finally the erection of a chapel on the

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grave of the Christian warriors was decided upon. With Reichenau and St. Gall there was also a good deal of business to transact, since ecclesiastics seldom forget to present their bills for any services they have rendered. They well knew how to bemoan and bewail the damages done to their monasteries, as well as the great loss of goods and chattels which they had experienced; and every day some delicate hint was dropped to the Duchess that a donation of land would be most acceptable to the afflicted servants of God. Far away in the Rhine valley, where Mount Breisach narrows the bed of the river with its sinister, bare rocks, the Duchess owned some property, called Saspach. On volcanic soil the vine thrives particularly well, so this would have suited the pious brothers of the Reichenau admirably, if it were only to find out the difference between the Rhine wines and those that grew near the lake; besides its being some slight compensation for their military services, and for the reciting of the necessary masses for the souls of the dead.

One day on which Dame Hadwig had not appeared quite disinclined to make the donation was followed by the arrival of the Subprior in the early morning, bringing a parchment with him, on which the whole formula of the donation was written down. It sounded really very well when read aloud how everything was to be given to St.

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Pirminius—house and yard, with all that was in it; cultivated and uncultivated land; woods and vineyards; meadows and brooks, with the right of building mills and of fishing; as well as the vassals, both male and female, who were living there. Even the customary curse was not wanting, and ran as follows: "If any one should dare to doubt the donation, or, worse still, try and rob the monastery of it, the *Anathema Marantha* shall be pronounced on him. The anger of God Almighty and all the holy angels shall fall on him. May he be stricken with leprosy, like Naaman the Syrian, and with sudden death, like Ananias and Sapphira, besides paying a fine of a pound of gold to the exchequer in expiation of his crime."

"The Lord Abbot wanted to save our gracious sovereign the trouble of writing the donation herself," said the Subprior. "There has been left an empty space for adding the name and boundaries of the property, as well as for the signatures of both parties and the necessary witnesses."

"Have you learned to be so quick in all your doings?" replied Dame Hadwig. "I will look at this parchment of yours some day or other."

"But it would be a very dear and desirable thing for the Abbot, if I could bring him back the deed, signed and sealed by your Highness to-day. It is only on account of the order and precision in the monastery's archives, the Abbot said."

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Dame Hadwig, casting a haughty look at the man, then said: "Tell your Abbot that I am just now summing up the account of how much the quartering of the brothers on the Hohentwiel has cost my kitchen and cellar. Tell him likewise that we have our own scribes, if we should feel inclined to give away landed property on the Rhine, and that—" She wanted to add a few more bitter words, but the Subprior here fell in coaxingly, telling her a number of cases where Christian kings and princes had done the same. How the King of France, for instance, had generously indemnified St. Martin of Tours for the losses which he had suffered through the Norman invasion; and how beneficial the donation had been for the giver's soul; for as fire was extinguished by water, thus the soul was purified by almsgiving. . . . But the Duchess, turning her back on him, left him standing there in the hall, with his many yet untold examples on the tip of his tongue.

"Too much zeal is a bad thing," muttered the monk; "the greater hurry, the less speed,' as the proverb has it." Dame Hadwig, having reached the entrance, turned round once more, and with a significant movement of the hand now said: "If you wish to go, you had better go at once!"

So he made his retreat.

To annoy the Abbot, the Duchess, on the very same day, sent a golden chain to the venerable

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Simon Bardo, in acknowledgment of his prosperous leadership.

The fate of Cappan, the Hunnic prisoner, was a matter of special interest to the Duchess. At first he had spent some anxious days. He did not then understand why his life had been spared, and he walked shyly about, like one who has no just claim for himself; and when he slumbered on his couch of straw evil dreams came to him. Then he saw large flowery plains, on which numberless gallows were growing like thistles, and on every one of them hung one of his countrymen, and he himself was suspended from the highest of all; and he could not find fault with this, as it was the usual fate allotted to prisoners of war in those days. No gallows, however, were erected for him. For some time he still cast sundry suspicious glances at the linden tree in the courtyard, which had a nice leafless branch; and he fancied sometimes that this branch was beckoning to him, and saying: "Heigho! how well thou wouldst adorn me!"

By degrees, however, he found out that the lime was merely a fine shady tree, and so he became less timid. His wounded foot was now healed, and he wandered about in yard and kitchen, looking on with mute astonishment at the doings of a German household. It is true, he still thought that a man's home ought to be the back of his horse; and that a skin-covered cart sufficed for women and chil-

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dren ; but when it rained, or the evenings were cool, the hearth-fire and the sheltering walls did not appear altogether despicable to him. Besides this, he began to find out that wine was better than mare's milk, and a woolen jacket softer than a wolf's skin. So his wish to escape dwindled away, and homesickness could not attack him, as a home was an unknown luxury to him.

In those days a maiden worked in house and garden whose name was Friderun; and her figure resembled a many-storied building with a pointed roof, her head having the shape of a pear. The first freshness of youth had for some time passed away from her, and when she opened her broad mouth for speech or laughter, a single long tooth became visible, indicative of her mature state. Evil tongues were wont to whisper that she had once been Master Spazzo's sweetheart; but that was long ago, as her affections had been bestowed these many years on a herdsman who had met his death by some Hunnic arrow, so that her heart was lonely now. Very tall people are generally good-natured, and do not suffer under the evil consequences of too much thinking. So she cast her eyes on the Hun, who was slinking about all alone in the courtyard, and her compassionate heart fastened on him, like a glistening dewdrop on a toadstool. She tried to instruct him in all the arts which she practised herself; and often

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when she had weeded the garden and dug the ground, she would give the hoe to Cappan, who willingly did what he had seen his instructress do before him. In the same way he followed her example when he saw her gathering beans or herbs, and after a few days, whenever water was to be fetched, the slender Friderun had only to point at the wooden pail to make Cappan take it up on his head and walk down with it to the splashing fountain.

Only in the kitchen they had no reason to be oversatisfied with the docile pupil's achievements; for one day when a piece of game was entrusted to him to beat tender with a wooden drumstick, old memories arose in his mind; and so he devoured part of it quite raw, along with the onions and leek, which had been prepared for seasoning the meat.

"I really believe that my prisoner pleases thee," Master Spazzo called out one day to her, when the Hun was busily splitting wood in the courtyard. A deep blush covered the cheeks of the tall maiden, who cast down her eyes. "If he could only speak German, and were not a damned heathen," continued Master Spazzo, but the slender maiden was too bashful to speak.

"I know how well thou deservest to be made happy, Friderun," Master Spazzo began again. Then Friderun's tongue was loosened. "With re-

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gard to the speaking of German," said she, still looking down, "I really should not mind that so much; and as for his being a heathen, I do not see why he need remain one. But—"

"But what?"

"He can not sit down like a decent human being when he eats. If he is to enjoy his meals, he must always be stretched out on the ground."

"That a spouse like thee would soon cure him of. How is it, hast thou already some sort of understanding on this subject with him?"

Friderun again held her tongue, and suddenly ran away like a frightened deer, her wooden shoes clattering over the stone flags. Master Spazzo then walked up to the wood-splitting Cappan, and clapping him first on the back to make him look up, he pointed with his forefinger at the flying Friderun, nodded his head interrogatively, and looked at him sharply. Cappan first pressed his right arm to his breast, bowed his head, and then jumped high up in the air, so that he spun round like the terrestrial globe on its axis, and finally stretched his mouth into a broad, joyous grin.

Master Spazzo could now see well enough how matters stood with both of them. Friderun, however, had not witnessed the Hun's demonstrations of joy. Heavy doubts were still weighing on her soul; therefore she had gone out of the castle-gate. There she plucked a wild-flower, and was now

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eagerly pulling off the white leaflets, one after the other, murmuring, "He loves me, loves me not, he loves me." When all had become a prey to the winds, her murmur ceased, and looking with beaming eyes at the stalk with its last remaining white leaf, she smilingly nodded her head at it.

Meanwhile, Spazzo, the chamberlain, expounded the case to the Duchess, whose active mind at once took up the idea of settling Cappan's fate. The Hun had given proofs of understanding many a useful art in the garden. He well knew, for instance, how to stop the cunning subterranean digging of moles. With bent willow-boughs, at the end of which a noose was fastened, he had contrived an untimely end for many a one of the black little animals. In one and the same moment they were jerked up to sunlight, gallows, and death. He also manufactured excellent traps for mice; in short, he showed himself an able huntsman in all that regarded the lowest kind of sport.

"We will give him some acres of land at the foot of the Stoffler mountain," said Dame Hadwig, "in return for which he can wage war against all obnoxious and injurious animals as far as our land goes; and if the tall Friderun really likes him, she can have him; for I very much doubt whether any other of the maidens of this land has cast loving eyes on him."

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So she told Ekkehard to prepare the prisoner for baptism, in order that he might be received as a member into the Christian community; and when he shook his head rather doubtfully, Dame Hadwig added: "Good intentions must make up for what is wanting in his understanding. The instruction you can make short, for he, no doubt, will understand as much as the Saxons did whom the great Emperor Charles drove into the river Weser."

Ekkehard did as he was told, and his instruction fell on good soil. Cappan had picked up many a German word in the course of his warlike expedition, and had, in common with all his countrymen, a great talent for guessing what was required of him, even when the words had not been apprehended. Signs and tokens also helped a good deal; for when Ekkehard sat before him, with the open Bible with golden initials on his knee, and pointed heavenward, the Hun knew of what he was speaking. The likeness of the devil he also understood, and indicated by gestures that he was to be abhorred, and before the sign of the cross he fell on his knees, as he had seen done by others. In this way the instruction was carried on.

When Cappan had also made progress in expressing himself, it came out that his past life had really been a very bad one. He nodded in the affirmative when asked whether he had taken

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pleasure in the destruction of churches and monasteries, and from the number of his outstretched fingers it became evident that he had assisted more than once in such sacrilege. With evident signs of sincere repentance, he confessed to having once eaten part of a slain priest's heart, in order to cure himself of fever. In expiation, he now diligently learned to express his guilt in words, and whenever a word was missing Friderun helped him. So in a short time Ekkehard could declare himself satisfied, though his mind certainly had not yet taken in all that St. Augustine requires in his book on the teaching of infidels. The same day was then fixed upon for both baptism and wedding. According to the Duchess's desire, he was to have three godfathers; one from Reichenau, one from St. Gall, and a third from among her lay vassals, in remembrance of the battle in which he had been taken prisoner. Those of the Reichenau sent Rudimann, the cellarer, while the vassalage was represented by Master Spazzo; and because the godfathers could not make up their minds whether the converted should be named in honor of Reichenau or Gallus, they brought the case before the Duchess to abide by her decision. She said: "Call him Paul, for he also has gone out breathing fury and vengeance against the disciples of the Lord, until the scales were taken from his eyes."

It was on a Saturday when the godfathers led

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Cappan, who had fasted during the whole day, to the castle chapel, and they alternately spent the night with him in prayer. The Hun was resigned and devout, and on the whole in a becoming frame of mind. He believed that the spirit of his mother, dressed in lambs' skins, had appeared to him, saying:

“Poor son, thy bow is broken,
And thou no more canst flee;
And those who have disarmed thee
Thy masters now shall be.”

Early on Sunday morning, when the pearly dew-drops were still hanging on the grass, and the first lark was soaring up to the bright blue sky, a small troop, bearing a cross and flag, marched down the hill—this time no funeral train!

Ekkehard walked in front, dressed in a purple priest's garment, and behind him came the Hun, between two of his godfathers. Thus they walked through the luxurious meadow-lands, down to the shores of the little river Aach. Arrived there, they stuck the cross into the white sand, and then formed a semicircle round him who for the last time was to be called Cappan. In the quiet of that Sabbath morning, the clear notes of the litany rose up to God, imploring Him to look down mercifully on the man who was now bending his head before

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Him, longing for deliverance from the yoke of heathendom and sin.

Then they told him to disrobe down to the belt. He knelt on the ground, while Ekkehard pronounced the exorcism over him, in the name of Him whom angels and archangels adore, before whom the heavens and earth tremble and abysses open. He then breathed three times on his forehead, and putting some consecrated salt into his mouth, as a symbol of new wisdom and new thoughts, he anointed his forehead and breast with holy oil. The Hun was perfectly awed, scarcely daring to breathe, so much did the solemnity of the action impress him, and when Ekkehard asked him, in the words of the prescribed formula, "Dost thou renounce the Devil and all his works?" he replied with a clear voice, "I renounce him!" and then repeated the words of the creed as well as he could. Upon this, Ekkehard immersed him in the river; the formula of baptism was pronounced, and the new Paul rose from the waters. . . . One melancholy look he cast at the fresh mound on the newly dug grave at the border of the wood; then his godfathers drew him out, and wrapped his trembling form in a dazzling white linen garment. Proudly he stood among his new brothers. Ekkehard then preached a short sermon on the text, "He is blessed who taketh good care of his garments, so that he shall not be found naked,"

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and exhorted him to wear this spotless linen in sign of his regeneration from sin to godliness wrought in him by baptism; and finally he laid both hands on his head. With loud-sounding, jubilant hymns, they led back the new Christian to the castle.

In the arched window embrasure in one of the basement chambers the tall Friderun had been sitting meanwhile, Praxedis gliding about her like a restless will-o'-the-wisp. She had begged the Duchess's permission to array the awkward bride on this her day of honor. Her hair was already entwined with red ribbons, and the apron with its wonderful number of folds, falling down to the high-heeled shoes, was put on. Over this was fastened the dark belt with its gilt border—only he who won the bride might unclasp it; and now Praxedis took up a glittering crown, bedecked with innumerable colored glass beads and tinsel.

"Holy Mother of God!" exclaimed she, "must this also be put on? If thou walkest along in that head-gear they will believe in the distance that some tower has sprung into life and is going to be wedded."

"It must be," said Friderun.

"And why *must* it be?" said the Greek. "I have seen many a smart bride at home wearing the myrtle wreath or the silver-green olive branch in her locks, and it was well so. To be sure, neither

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myrtle nor olive grows in these dark, gloomy fir woods of yours, but ivy would be pretty also, Friderun?"

But she turned round angrily on her chair. "Rather not marry at all than go to church with leaves and grass in my hair," replied she. "That may do well enough for foreigners, but when a Hegau maiden goes to her wedding a crown must adorn her head. Thus it has always been, ever since the Rhine flowed through the Bodensee, and the mountains have stood here. We Suabians are a princely race, as my father said many a time."

"Your will shall be done," said Praxedis, fastening the spangled crown on her head.

The tall bride arose, but a frown had gathered on her forehead, like a fleeting cloud that throws its shadow on a sunny plain.

"Wilt thou cry now, so that the tears may be spared thee in wedlock?" asked the Greek.

Friderun made a serious face, and the ungracious mouth assumed a very sorrowful expression, so that Praxedis had some difficulty in restraining a laugh.

"I feel so depressed," said the bride of the Hun.

"And what is depressing thee, future rival of the pine trees on the Stöffler mountain?"

"I am afraid that the young men will play me some trick because I am marrying a foreigner.

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When the convent farmer of the Schlangenhof brought home the old widow from Bregenz Wood they went to his house on the wedding-night, and with bull's horns, brass kettles, and sea-shells made as terrible a noise as if a hailstorm was to be frightened away; and when the miller of Rielasingen came out of the house, on the first morning after his marriage, they had put a dry and withered May-pole before his door, and instead of flowers and ribbons a wisp of straw and a ragged apron hung from it."

"Be sensible," said Praxedis, soothingly.

But Friderun would not take comfort, and dolefully went on, "And what if they should treat me like the gamekeeper's widow when she married the apprentice boy? Her roof was cut in twain during the night, so that one half fell down to the right and one to the left; and the starry sky shone into their marriage-bed; and the rooks flew about their heads, without their knowing why or wherefore."

Praxedis laughed. "I hope that thou hast got a good conscience, Friderun," said she significantly; but Friderun was now very nearly crying.

"And who knows," said she evasively, "what my Cappan—"

"Paul," Praxedis corrected her.

"—may have done in his younger days. Last night I dreamed that he held me close in his arms,

Ekkehard

when suddenly a Hunnic woman, with yellow face and black hair, came and tore him away. 'He is mine,' cried she, and when I did not let him go, she became a serpent, and coiled herself tightly around him."

"Leave alone serpents and Hunnic women now," interrupted Praxedis, "and get thyself ready, for they are already coming up the hill. Don't forget the sprig of rosemary and the white handkerchief."

Cappan's white garment shone out brightly in the courtyard, and so Friderun banished all unpleasant thoughts and walked out. The bridesmaids welcomed her outside; he who had just been baptized laughed at her with his whole face; the chapel-bell rang out merrily, and so they went to be married.

The religious ceremony was over, and the new couple walked out of the castle yard with beaming faces. Friderun's kith and kin had come, strong, healthy-looking people, who as regarded bodily height did not fall short of Friderun. They were farmers and yeomen from the neighborhood, and had come to help in lighting the first fire on the new hearth at the foot of the Hohenstoffeln, and to celebrate the wedding in all due form. On a cart decorated with garlands, which headed the train, the bride's outfit was to be seen. There the huge bedstead of pine wood was not missing, on which

Ekkehard

roses and magic signs were painted, meant to drive away nightmares, goblins, and other nocturnal terrors. Besides this, there were still sundry boxes and trunks, containing useful household articles.

The bridesmaids carried the distaff, with the bundle of flax, and the prettily adorned bridal broom, made of white birch twigs—simple emblems of industry and order for the future household.

Loud shouts of joy and merriment were not wanting either, and Cappan felt as if the baptismal floods had swept away all recollection of his having ever lived on the back of a swift-footed horse. Decently and soberly he walked along with his new relations, as if he had been a bailiff or magistrate of Hegau since his youth. Before the noise of the merrymakers going down the hill had died away, two nice-looking lads, the sons of the steward at the imperial castle of Bodmann, and cousins of Friderun, appeared before the Duchess and her guests. They came to invite them to the wedding, each with a cowslip stuck behind his ear and a nosegay in his buttonhole.

Somewhat embarrassed, they remained standing at the entrance until the Duchess made them a sign to approach, upon which they walked on a few steps, stopped again, and, scraping a deep bow, spoke the old customary words of invitation to the wedding-feast of their cousin, begging her to fol-

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low them over dale and vale, road and path, moat and bridge, to the house of the wedding. There she would find some vegetables, such as the good God had given. A tun would be tapped, and fiddles would play, and there would be dancing and games. "We beseech you to accept two bad messengers for one good one. Blessed be Jesus Christ!" so they concluded their speech, and without waiting for the answer they scraped another bow and quickly hurried away.

"Shall we give the honor of our presence to the youngest of our Christian subjects?" gaily asked Dame Hadwig. The guests well knew that questions which were so graciously put must not be answered in the negative. So they all rode over in the afternoon. Rudimann, the deputy of St. Pirmin's monastery, accompanied them; but he was silent and watchful. His account with Ekkehard had not yet been settled.

The Stoffer mountain, with its three basalt pinacles feathered with stately pine trees, looks proudly down over the land. The castle, whose ruins now crown its summit, was not built then; only on the highest of the three points stood a deserted tower. Somewhat lower down, on a projecting part of the hill, there was a modest little house, hidden among the trees, which was to be the domicile of the newly married pair. As a tribute and sign that the owner of the house was

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the Duchess's vassal, it was decreed that he should furnish fifty moles' skins every year, and on the day of St. Gallus a live wren.

On a green meadow in the woods the wedding-party had erected their camp. In large kettles and pans a tremendous cooking and frying was going on; and he who could not get some dish or plate feasted off a wooden board; and where a fork was wanting, a double-pointed hazel wand was installed in its place.

Cappan had made an effort to sit decently and upright by the side of his spouse; but in the depth of his mind he was revolving the thought whether after some time he could not resume his old custom of lying down during meal-times.

During the long intervals between the different dishes—for though the repast had begun at mid-day it was to last until sunset—the Hun rested his limbs, which had been tortured by the continual sitting.

Welcomed by the sounds of the rustic musical band, the Duchess, with her train, now approached on horseback. Stopping her palfrey, she looked down into the crowd of merrymakers, among whom the new Paul was showing off his wild antics. The music not suiting him, he shouted and whistled his own time, wheeling his tall spouse about in a labyrinthine dance. It looked like a walking tower dancing with a wild-cat: one slow,

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one swift; now together, then apart; now breast to breast, then back to back. Sometimes he would suddenly thrust his partner away, and clapping his wooden shoes together in the air, he made seven capers, one higher than the other; and finally dropping on his knees before Dame Hadwig, he bowed his head as if he would kiss the dust which her horse's hoofs had touched. This was the expression of his gratitude.

His Hegau cousins, looking on at this wonderful dancing, conceived the laudable desire of emulation, and perhaps later they had themselves instructed in the art; for one still hears a legendary account of the "*seven capers*," or the Hunnic "*hop*," in those parts, which, as a variation from the customary monotonous Suabian round dances, had since those days become the crowning event of all festivities.

"Where is Ekkehard?" asked the Duchess, who, after getting down from her palfrey, had walked through the ranks of her subjects. Praxedis pointed over to a shady spot, where a gigantic pine tree lifted its dark-green top toward the sky. On its knotty, rugged roots the monk was sitting. The loud merriment of the crowd of people oppressed his heart, though he could not tell why. So he had gone aside, and was dreamily gazing at the faint distant outlines of the Alps rising over the woody hills.

Ekkehard

It was one of those soft, balmy evenings, "when the air is tempered and mixed up with sun-fire." The distance was shrouded in a soft glowing haze. He who has ever looked down from those quiet mountain-tops, when on a bright, radiant day the sun is slowly sinking, arrayed in all the splendor of his royal robes, when heaven and earth are palpitating with warmth and light, while dark purple shadows fill up the valleys, and a glory of liquid gold illumines the snowy Alpine peaks—he will not easily forget that sight; and perchance when sitting within dark walls again the memory of it will rise in his heart as soft and bewitchingly sweet as a song uttered in the melting tones of the south.

Ekkehard was sitting there, with a serious expression on his countenance, his head supported by his right hand.

"He is no longer as he used to be," said Dame Hadwig to the Greek maid.

"He is no longer as he used to be," thoughtlessly repeated Praxedis, for she was intently gazing on the women of the Hegau, in their holiday garments; and while scrutinizing those high, stiff bodices, and tun-like, starched skirts, she wondered whether the genius of good taste had left that land forever in despair, or whether his foot had never entered it.

Dame Hadwig now approached Ekkehard. He started up from his mossy seat as if he saw a ghost.

Ekkehard

"All alone, and away from the merrymakers?" asked she. "What are you doing here?"

"I am wondering where real happiness may be found," replied Ekkehard.

"Happiness?" repeated the Duchess. "'Fortune is a fickle dame, who seldom stays long anywhere,' says the proverb. Has she never paid you a visit?"

"Probably not," said the monk, riveting his eyes on the ground. With renewed vigor, the music and noise of the dancers struck the ear.

"Those who lightly tread the green meadows, and know how to express with their feet what oppresses their hearts, are happy," continued he. "Perhaps one requires very little to be happy; but above all"—pointing over to the distant, glittering Alpine peaks—"there must be no distant heights which our feet may never hope to reach."

"I do not understand you," coldly said the Duchess, but her heart thought otherwise than her tongue spoke. "And how fares your Virgil?" said she, changing the conversation. "During those days of anxiety and warfare, I am afraid that dust and cobwebs must have settled on it."

"He will always find a refuge in my heart, even if the parchment should decay," replied he. "Only a few moments ago his lines in praise of agriculture passed through my mind. Yonder the little house, nestling in the shade-giving trees; down below, the dark fertile fields; and a newly wedded

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pair, going to earn their bread with hoe and plow
from kind mother Earth. With a feeling almost of
envy, Virgil's picture rose before me:

“ ‘Simple and artless, his life is with many a blessing
surrounded,
Rich with many a joy, and peaceful rest after labor,
Grottoes and shady retreats affording a shelter for
slumber.’ ”

“You well know how to adapt his verses to life,”
said Dame Hadwig, “but I fear that your envy has
made you forget Cappan's duties of destroying the
moles and the obnoxious field-mice. And then the
joys of winter! When the snow rises like a wall
up to the straw-thatched roof, so that daylight is
sorely perplexed through what chink or crevice it
may creep into the house—”

“Even such a dilemma I could bear with com-
posure, and Virgil, too, knows how this may be
done:

“ ‘Many a one, in the winter, will sit by the glare of the
fire,
Late in the evening, then, the light-giving torches pre-
paring,
During the time that his wife his favorite ditties is
singing,
Throwing the shuttle along with a dexterous hand
through the texture.’ ”

Ekkehard

"His wife?" maliciously asked the Duchess. "But if he has no wife?"

From the other side there now arose a loud shout of delighted laughter. They had put their Hunnic cousin on a board, and were carrying him high above their heads, as they used to carry the newly chosen king on his shield in the olden days of election. Even in this elevated position he made some gleeful capers.

"And *may* not have a wife?" said Ekkehard absently. His forehead was burning. He covered it with his right hand. Wherever he looked, the sight pained him. Yonder, the loud joy of the wedding-guests, here the Duchess, and in the distance the glittering mountains. An inexpressible pain was gnawing at his heart; but his lips remained closed. "Be strong and silent," he said to himself.

He was in reality no longer as he used to be. The undisturbed peace of his lonely cell had forsaken him. The late battle, as well as all the excitement brought on by the Hunnic invasion, had widened the scope of his thoughts; and the signs of favor which the Duchess had shown him had called up a fierce conflict in his heart. By day and by night he was haunted by the recollection how she had stood before him, hanging the relic round his neck, and giving him the sword that had been her husband's; and in evil moments self-reproaches—vague and unexpressed as yet—that he had received

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these gifts without protest passed through his troubled soul. Dame Hadwig had no idea of all that was stirring in his heart. She had accustomed herself to think more indifferently of him, since she had been humiliated by his apparently not understanding her; but as often as she saw him again, with his noble forehead clouded by grief, and with that mute appealing look in his eyes, then the old feeling was renewed.

"If you take such delight in agricultural pursuits," said she lightly, "I can easily help you. The Abbot of Reichenau has provoked me. To think of asking for the pearl of my estates, as if it were a mere crumb of bread, which one shakes down from the tablecloth, without so much as looking at it!"

Here something rustled in the bushes behind them, but they did not notice it. Something of a dark-brown color might have been seen between the foliage. Was it a fox, or a monk's garment?

"I will appoint you steward of it," continued Dame Hadwig. "Then you will have all that the lack of has made you melancholy to-day, and far more still. My estate of Saspach is situated on the merry old Rhine, and the Kaiserstuhl slope boasts the honor of being the first to bear the grapevine in our lands. The people are honest and good thereabouts, though they speak rather a rough language."

Ekkehard

Ekkehard's eyes were still resting on the ground.

"I can also give you a description of your life there, though I have not Virgil's talent for painting. Fancy that autumn has come. You have led a healthy life, getting up with the sun, and going to bed with the chickens; and so vintage-time has arrived. From all sides men and maids are descending, with baskets full of ripe, luscious grapes. You stand at the door looking on—"

Again the rustling in the bushes.

"—and wondering what the wine will be like, and whose health you are going to drink in it. The Voges mountains seem to wink over at you as bright and blue as the Alps do from here; and as you are gazing at them you see a cloud of dust rising on the highroad from Breisach. Soon after, horses and carriages become visible, and—well, Master Ekkehard, who is coming?"

Ekkehard, who had scarcely followed her recital, shyly said:

"Who?"

"Who else but your mistress, who will not give up her sovereign right of inquiring into the doings of her subjects?"

"And then?"

"Then? Then I shall gather information about how Master Ekkehard has been fulfilling his duties; and they will all say: 'He is good and earnest, and if he would not think and brood quite so

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much, and not read so often in his parchments, we should like him still better.' ”

“And then?” asked he once more. His voice sounded strange.

“Then I shall say in the words of the Scripture: ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.’ ”

Ekkehard stood there like one but half-conscious. He lifted one arm and let it fall again. A tear trembled in his eye. He was very unhappy.

. . . At the same time a man softly crept out from the bushes. As soon as he felt the grass under his feet again, he let his habit, which had been gathered up, drop down. Looking stealthily back once more at the two, standing there, he shook his head, like one who has made a discovery. He had certainly not gone into the bushes to gather violets.

The wedding-feast had by slow stages got to the point where a general chaos was imminent. The mead was having its effect on the different minds. One hung his upper garment on a tree, feeling an almost irresistible inclination to smash everything, while another strove to embrace everybody. A third, who remembered having culled many a kiss from Friderun’s cheek, ten years ago, sat gloomily at the table, where he had emptied goblet after goblet, and, looking down at the ants that crept

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about on the ground, said to himself: "Heigho! None of them is worth a straw." The two youths who had looked so very shy in the morning, when they came to invite the Duchess, were now playing an Allemannic trick on their Hunnic kinsman. They had dragged a large linen sheet out of one of the wedding trunks. On this they placed the unresisting Cappan, and then, taking hold of the four corners, they jerked him up into the air. The victim of this trick, taking this treatment as a mark of friendship and respect customary in those parts, submitted with a good grace, himself leaping up and down.

Suddenly the tall Friderun gave a loud shriek, upon which all heads were turned round to see what might have caused it. The two cousins almost let fall the sheet, when a shout of delight broke forth, so loud and uproarious that even the old fir-grown basalt rocks were probably surprised by it, accustomed though they were to the noise of tempests and storms.

Audifax and Hadumoth were there, on their way back from the Huns, and had been discovered first by the tall bride. Audifax led the horse that carried the treasure-boxes by the reins, and with beaming faces the two children walked side by side. That day they had once more beheld the top of the Hohentwiel, and had greeted it with a shout of delight. "Don't tell them everything," whis-

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pered Audifax, putting long willow branches over the baskets.

Friderun was the first who ran to meet them, and, snatching Hadumoth up from the ground, she carried her off in triumph.

"Welcome, ye lost ones! Drink, little piper; drink, my boy!" so they cried on all sides, for they all knew of his captivity, and held out the huge stone jugs in sign of welcome.

The children had agreed together on the road in what way they should accost the Duchess when they reached home.

"We must thank her very prettily," Hadumoth had said. "And I must give her back the gold thaler. I got Audifax for nothing, I shall tell her."

"No, we will add to it two of the biggest gold coins," Audifax had replied. "This we will present, begging her to remain our gracious mistress as before. That shall be our thanks, as well as the fine for my having slain the woman of the wood."

So they had got the gold all ready.

They now caught sight of the Duchess, standing with Ekkehard under the pine tree. The wild burst of joy had interrupted their agricultural conversation. Praxedis came bounding along to impart the wondrous news, and following on her heels the two youthful runaways walked hand in hand. They both knelt down before Dame Had-

Ekkehard

wig, Hadumoth holding up her thaler, and Audifax his two big gold coins. He tried to speak, but his voice failed him. . . . Then Dame Hadwig, with lofty grace, addressed the surrounding crowd:

"The silliness of my two young subjects affords me an opportunity to give them a proof of my favor. Be witnesses thereof."

Breaking off a hazel wand from a neighboring bush, she approached the children, and after first shaking the golden coins out of their hands, so that they flew into the grass, she touched their heads with the branch, saying: "Arise, and in future scissors shall never cut off your hair any more. As bond-servants belonging to the castle of Hohen-twiél ye have knelt down; stand up again as freedmen, and may ye be as fond of each other in your free state as you were before!"

This was the form of granting freedom according to the Salic law. The Emperor Lotharius had shaken a golden coin out of his old servant Doda's hand, thus freeing her from the yoke of slavery; and as Audifax was of Franconian birth, Dame Hadwig had not acted according to the Allemanic laws.

The two children arose. They had well understood what had happened. A strange dizzy feeling had seized the little goatherd's brain. The dream of his youth—liberty, gold, treasure—all

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had become true, a lasting reality for all days to come!

When the mist before his eyes had cleared away again, he beheld Ekkehard's serious countenance, and, throwing himself at his feet with Hadumoth, he cried: "Father Ekkehard, we thank you also for having been good to us!"

"What a pity that it is already so late," said Praxedis, "or you might have joined another pair in wedlock, or at least have sanctified a solemn betrothal; for these two belong as much to each other as yonder pair."

Ekkehard let his blue eyes rest for a while on the two children. Laying his hands on their heads, and making the sign of the cross over them, he softly said to himself, "Where is happiness?"

Late at night Rudimann, the cellarer, rode back to his monastery. The ford being dry, he was able to cross it on horseback. From the Abbot's cell a gleam of light still fell on the lake. So Rudimann knocked at his door, and, but half opening it, said: "My ears have taken in more to-day than they liked to hear. 'Tis all over with the Saspach estate on the Rhine. She is going to make that milksop from St. Gall steward of it."

"*Varium et mutabile semper femina!* Woman is ever fickle and changeable!" murmured the Abbot, without looking round. "Good-night!"

Ekkehard

CHAPTER XVII

GUNZO VERSUS EKKEHARD

DURING the time in which all that has been told until now was happening on the shores of the Lake of Constance, far away in the Belgian lands, in the monastery of the holy Amandus, a monk had been sitting in his cell. Day after day, whenever the convent rules permitted it, he sat there transfixed as by a spell. The rough and cheerless winter-time had come; all the rivers were frozen up, and snow covered the plain as far as eye could see: he scarcely noticed it. Spring followed and drove away winter: he heeded it not. The brothers talked of war and evil tidings which had reached them from the neighboring Rhinelands—but he had no time to listen to these tales.

In his cell every article of furniture, nay, even the floor, was covered with parchments, for almost all the monastery's books had emigrated to his chamber. There he sat reading and thinking, and reading again, as if he wanted to find out the first cause of all being. On his right lay the Psalms and holy Scriptures; on his left the remains of heathen-

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ish wisdom. Everything he pored over assiduously, now and then a malicious smile interrupting the seriousness of his studies, upon which he would hastily scribble down some lines on a narrow strip of parchment. Were these grains of gold and precious stones which he dug out of the mines of ancient wisdom? No.

"What on earth can be the matter with brother Gunzo?" said his fellow-monks among themselves. "Formerly his tongue used to rattle like a mill-wheel, and the books were seldom disturbed in their rest by him; for did he not often say with boasting mien, 'They can only tell me what I know already?' And now? Why, now his pen hurries on and on, sputtering and scratching, so that you may hear the noise it makes even in the cross-passage. Does he hope to become notary or prime minister of the Emperor? Is he trying to find the philosopher's stone, or is he perhaps writing down his journey in Italy?"

But brother Gunzo continued his labors undisturbed, whatever they were. Untiringly he emptied his jug of water and read his classics. The first thunderstorms came, telling of summer's heat; but he let thunder and lightning do as they pleased, without minding them. His slumbers at night were sometimes broken by his rushing up to his inkstand, as if he had caught some good ideas in his dreams; but often they had vanished before he

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had succeeded in writing them down. Still his perseverance in trying to attain his aim never wavered, and consoling himself with the prophetic words of Homer, "Yet though it tarry long, the day is sure to come," he crept back to his couch.

Gunzo was in the prime of life, of moderate height and portly figure. When he stood before his well-polished metal mirror in the early morning, and gazed somewhat longer than was necessary on his own image, he would often stroke his reddish beard with a threatening gesture, as if he were going out there and then to fight some one in single combat.

In his veins flowed Franconian as well as Gallic blood, and this latter gave him something of the liveliness and sprightliness which is wanting in all people of pure Teutonic race. For this reason he had bitten and torn a good many more goose quills, while writing, than any monk in a German monastery would have done, besides holding many a soliloquy in the same space of time. In spite of this he mastered the natural restlessness of his body, and forced his feet to keep quiet under the heavily laden writing desk.

One soft, balmy summer evening, when his pen had again flitted over the patient parchment like a will-o'-the-wisp, emitting a soft creaking sound, it suddenly began to slacken its pace, then made a pause; a few strokes more, and he executed a tre-

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mendous flourish on the remaining space below, so that the ink made an involuntary shower of spots, like a black constellation. He had written the word *finis*, and with a deep sigh of relief he rose from his chair, like a man from whose mind some great weight had been taken. Casting a long look on what lay before him, black on white, he solemnly exclaimed, "Praised be the holy Amundus! we are avenged!"

At this great and elevating moment, he had finished a libel, dedicated to the venerable brotherhood on the Reichenau, and aimed at Ekkehard, the custodian at St. Gall. When the fair-haired interpreter of Virgil took leave of his monastery and went to the Hohentwiel, he never, though he searched the remotest corners of his memory, had an inkling of the fact that there was a man living whose greatest wish and desire was to take vengeance on him; for he was inoffensive and kind-hearted, never willingly hurting a fly. And yet so it was, for between heaven and earth, and especially in the minds of learned men, many things will happen which the reason of the reasonable never dreams of.

History has its caprices, both in preserving and destroying. The German songs and epics, which the great Emperor Charles had so carefully collected, were to perish in the dust and rubbish of the following ages; while the work of Brother

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Gunzo, which never benefited any of the few who read it, has come down to posterity. Let the monstrous deed, which so excited the Gallic scholar's ire, therefore be told in his own words.

"For a long space of time," thus he wrote to his friends on the Reichenau, "the revered and beloved King Otto had carried on negotiations with the different Italian princes, to let me come over to his country. But as I was neither of such low birth, nor so dependent, that I could have been forced to this step, he himself sent me a request of which the consequence was my pledging myself to obey his call. Thus it happened that when he left Italy I soon followed him, and when I did so I did it with the hope that my coming, while harming no one, might benefit many; for what sacrifices does the love of one's fellow-creatures, and the desire to please, not entice us into? Thus I traveled onward, not like a Briton, armed with the sharp weapons of censure, but in the service of love and learning.

"Over high mountain-passes and steep ravines and valleys I arrived at last at the monastery of St. Gall, in a state of such bodily exhaustion that my hands, stiffened by the icy mountain air, refused me their service, so that I had to be taken down from my mule by strangers' hands. The hope of the traveler was to find a peaceful resting-place within the monastic walls, which hope was

Ekkehard

strengthened on beholding the frequent bending of heads, the sober-colored garments, soft-treading steps, and sparing use of speech prevalent there. So I was wholly unprepared for what was to follow, although by a strange chance I happened to think of Juvenal's saying with regard to the false philosophers:

'Sparing and soft is their speech, but malice is lurking behind it!'

And who would have believed that the said heathen was gifted with a prophetic vision of future cowl-bearing wickedness?

"Yet I went on harmlessly enjoying life, waiting to see whether among the scanty words of the brothers some sparks of philosophical wisdom would shine forth. All remained dark, however, for they were preparing the arms of cunning.

"Among their numbers there was also a young convent pupil and his uncle, who—well, who was no better than he should be! They called him a worthy teacher of the school, although to me he appeared rather to look at the world with the eyes of a turtle-dove. Of this languishing-looking wiseacre I shall have to say more, presently. Listen, and judge by his deeds.

"He instigated the convent pupil to become a partaker of his base design.

Ekkehard

“Night had come, and with it the time for grief-stilling slumber:

After the sumptuous meal, Bacchus exacted his rights—’

when an evil star prompted my making a grammatical mistake in our Latin table-talk, using an *accusative* where I ought to have put an *ablative*.

“Now it became evident, in what kind of arts that far-famed teacher had been instructing his pupil. ‘Such an offense against the laws of grammar deserves the rod,’ mockingly said that little imp to *me* the well-tried scholar; and he further produced a rimed libel, which his fine teacher must have prompted him to, and which caused a rough cisalpine burst of laughter in the refectory, at the expense of the stranger and guest.

“But who does not know what the verses of a set of overbearing monks must be like? What do such as they know of the inner structure of a poem, where all must be artistically built up, to produce a fine and pleasing effect? What of the high dignity of poetry? They pucker up their lips, and spout forth a poem, like to that Lucilius, who has been branded by Horace, and who, while standing on one foot only, dictated two hundred verses and more before an hour had elapsed.

“Judge now, you venerable brothers, what insults have been heaped on me; and what must be

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the character of the man who can upbraid his fellow-creature for mistaking an *ablative*!"

The man who, intending only a harmless jest, had committed this fearful crime, was Ekkehard. But a few weeks before the sudden turn in his fate brought him to the Hohentwiel, the terrible deed had been done. With the coming morn on the next day he had forgotten the conversation that had taken place at supper with the overbearing Italian, but in the bosom of him who had been convicted of the wrong *ablative* was matured a rancor as fierce and gnawing as that which, caused by the war-deeds of Achilles, drove the Telamonian Aias to destroy himself, and which followed him even into Hades.

Gunzo rode toward the north out of the valley along through which the Sitter runs; he saw the Bodensee and the Rhine, and thought of the *ablative*! He entered the gray and ancient gates of Cologne, and crossed the frontiers of Belgium; but the false *ablative* sat behind him on the saddle like an incubus. The cloister-walls of the holy Amandus could not exclude it; and in the early psalms at morning, and during the litany and vespers, the *accusative* rose before his mind, demanding its expiatory sacrifice.

Of all the unpleasant days of one's life those imprint themselves deepest in our minds on which humiliation has befallen us by our own fault. In-

Ekkehard

stead of being angry with one's self, one easily bears an ill will toward all who were the involuntary witnesses of our defeat. The human heart is so very unwilling to confess its own failings; and many a one who can think unmoved of past battles and dangers, feels the blood rush to his cheeks at the recollection of some foolish word which escaped him just when he would have liked so much to make a brilliant remark.

Therefore Gunzo was bent on taking his revenge on Ekkehard, and he had an able and sharp pen, and spent many a month over his work, so that it became a masterpiece of its kind. It was a black soup, made up of hundreds of learned quotations, richly seasoned with pepper and wormwood, and all those spicy, bitter things, which give such an especially piquant flavor to the controversies of ecclesiastics.

Besides this, a delightful undercurrent of rudeness pervaded the whole; so that the reader felt as though a man were being thrashed with actual flails in a neighboring barn. This makes a very pleasant contrast to our present times, in which the poison is presented in the shape of gilt pills, and when the combatants first exchange a polite bow before they break each other's heads.

The treatise was divided into two parts, the first serving to prove that only an ignorant and uncultivated mind could be shocked by so slight an error

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as the mistaking of a case; while the second was written in order to convince the world that the author himself was the wisest, most learned, and yet most pious of all his contemporaries.

To this end he had read the classics and the holy Scriptures in the sweat of his brow, so that he could make a list of all the places in which the caprice or negligence of an author had likewise misplaced an *ablative*. Thus he managed to name caprice or negligence of an author had likewise and Priscianus. He found a further example in Persius, where the *ablative* stands in the place of the *genitive*, besides a number of instances in the books of Moses and the Psalms.

"And," so wrote Gunzo, "if a number of such instances can be found even in the holy Scriptures, who is so wicked that he would dare to blame or change such a mode of expression? Wrongly, therefore, does the little monk of St. Gall believe that I was not well versed in grammar, although my tongue may sometimes be impeded by the habits of my own language, which, though derived from the Latin, is yet very different from it. Now, blunders are made through carelessness and human imperfection in general; for, says Priscianus very truly: 'I do not believe, that of all human inventions, a single one can be perfect in all respects and on all sides. In like manner, Horace has often taken it on himself to excuse negligences of style

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and language in eminent men: "*Sometimes even Homer nods;*" and Aristotle says: "All that our tongue utters is merely an outward expression of what is stamped on our mind. The idea of a thing, therefore, is always preexistent to the expression, and therefore the thing itself is of far greater importance than the mere word. But whenever the meaning is abstruse, thou shalt patiently, and with thy reasoning powers, try to find out the real import." " "

Then there followed innumerable classical examples of awkward and negligent expressions of thought, which ended with the words of the Apostle, who calls himself "unskilled, with regard to speech, but not unskilled in knowledge."

"If one therefore," continued the screed, "examines the behavior of my antagonist of St. Gall, one feels tempted to believe that he had once invaded the garden of some wise man, from one of whose hotbeds he had stolen a radish, which had disturbed his stomach and increased his gall. Let everybody therefore keep a sharp lookout on his garden. Evil communications corrupt good manners.

"Yet it is possible also that he could not have done otherwise; for having perchance rummaged the whole day long, in the remotest folds of his cowl, to find something wherewith to regale the strange guest, and not finding anything but cun-

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ning and malice, he let his guest taste a bit of that. Bad men have evil possessions.

“With his behavior, his outward appearance—which we did not fail carefully to investigate—was in strict harmony. His countenance bore a pale lustre, like bad metal used for the adulteration of the genuine; his hair was crimped; his hood finer and daintier than necessary, and his shoes of light make—so that all the signs of vanity were found on him, which were a vexation in the eyes of St. Hieronymus when he wrote: ‘To my great regret, there are some of the clergy in my parish who are very anxious for their garments to be well scented and their nails well polished; who anoint their curled hair with precious ointments, and who wear dainty, embroidered shoes. Such garments, however, are scarcely fitted for a courtier or bridegroom, let alone for one of the Lord’s elect.’

“I have reflected further whether the sound of his own name was not in harmony with his actions likewise. Ekkehard, or Akhar, was his name, as if already at his baptism, by dint of a prophetic providence, he had been stigmatized with the name of a malefactor; for who does not know of that Akhar who appropriated to himself a purple mantle, as well as two hundred bags of silver and a golden wedge, out of the booty at Jericho, so that Joshua had him led out into a remote valley, where he was stoned to death by all Israel, and

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all he possessed was given up to the flames? Of such a man his namesake of St. Gall has shown himself to be a worthy successor; for he who disregards the laws of politeness and good breeding acts as badly as a thief. He steals the gold of true wisdom.

"If it were permitted to believe in the transmigration of souls, as Pythagoras has taught, it would be beyond all doubt that the soul of the Hebrew Akhar had entered the frame of this Ekkehard, and in this case one ought to pity it, as it were better to dwell in the body of a fox even than in that of a crafty and cunning monk. All this which I have said until now has been said without any personal hatred. My hatred is directed only against the man's inherent wickedness. Consequently I detest only an attribute of his and not the substance itself, which we are bound to honor as God's likeness, according to the Scripture."

"Please to observe now," wrote Gunzo in the second part of his book, "how insanely my enemy has ignored the benefits of knowledge. More than a hundred written volumes had I brought with me over the Alps: weapons of peace, such as Marcianus's flowery instructions in the seven liberal arts; Plato's unfathomable depth in his *Timæus*; the obscure wisdom of Aristotle, hardly lighted up in our present days, in his book on the *Herme-neia*, and Cicero's eloquence in the *Topica*.

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"How serious and instructive might our conversation not have been, if I had been questioned about these treasures! How could I imagine that such as I, whom God has so richly gifted, would be ridiculed on account of mistaking a *casus*! I, who know Donat and Priscianus almost by heart!

"It is probable that that empty coxcomb believes he carries the whole of the *Grammatica* in his hood, but, beloved brethren, believe me he has scarcely had a glimpse of her back in the distance; and if he were to try to catch sight of her radiant countenance, he would stumble, and fall to the ground, over his own awkward feet. The *Grammatica* is a noble woman, who wears for a wood-cutter an aspect very different from that she has for an Aristotle.

"But how shall I speak to you of grammar's sister, of dialectics, whom the Greek sage has called the nurse of the intellect? Oh noble art! that entangles the fool in her nets, while showing the wise man how to evade them, and discloses to our wondering eyes the hidden threads by which being and not being are linked together! But of that, yon cowl-bearing monk knows nothing! Nothing of that subtle fineness which, with nineteen kinds of syllogisms, knows how to explain all that has ever been thought before, as well as all that can be thought hereafter. God is wise, and deprives him of such knowledge, foreseeing that

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he would only use it for deceitful and wicked ends. . . .”

In this way the learned Italian proved his superiority in all the liberal arts. To rhetoric and all its treasures a whole chapter was dedicated, in which certain persons to whom the Goddess Minerva had once appeared in their dreams, and fools who believed that brevity of expression is a proof of wisdom, were pointedly alluded to. Then arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy were discussed; interspersed with deep investigations on the question whether the stars were gifted with intellectual souls and a claim on immortality; and further whether at the time when Joshua had said, “Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon,” he had also imposed immobility on the other five planets; or whether these had been allowed to continue their circular motion.

A profound sounding of this problem offered an opportunity of speaking first of the harmony of the spheres, and then of music in general, as the last of the liberal arts; and thus the vengeance-fraught little ship, carried along on the billowy floods of learning, at last reached the goal it had so long been aiming at.

“Wherefore do you think, now, that I have expounded all this?” he asked finally.

“Not to expound the elements of the liberal arts, but to expose the folly of an ignorant man,

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who preferred pecking away at grammatical blunders to deriving true wisdom from his guest; for though his inward nature may forever be shut out from the realms of art, he might at least have caught an outward reflection of my light. But he was swelling with insolent pride, so that he preferred to pass for a sage among his fellow-monks like to that frog which, sitting in the mire, thought to rival the bull in greatness. Ah, never has the pitiful creature stood on the heights of learning, hearing God's own voice speak to him. Born in the wilderness and grown up amidst silly, prattling people, his soul has remained on the level of the beasts of the field. Unwilling to dwell in the active life of this world, and incapable of a life of inward contemplation, he has been marked by the enemy of mankind as his own. Willingly I would exhort you to try what could be done for him, with the aid of healing medicine, but I sadly fear that his disease is too deeply rooted.

“‘For on a hardened skin even sneeze-wort will prove unavailing,’

says Persius.

“And now, after having read all this, please to judge, you venerable brothers, whether I am the man to have merited such treatment and such ridicule from the hands of a fool. I deliver both him and myself into your hands, for before the judg-

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ment of the just the fool falls back into his own nothingness. *Finis!*"

". . . Praised be the holy Amandus!" said Gunzo once more, when the last word of his work had been written down. The old serpent would certainly have swelled with joy, if it could have watched him, in the full glory of his likeness to deity, when he added the last dot. "And God looked on all that he had made, and behold, it was good." And Gunzo? He did the same.

Then he walked up to his metal looking-glass, and after gazing for a long time at his own reflection, as if it were of the greatest importance for him to study the countenance of the man who had annihilated Ekkehard of St. Gall, he finally made a deep bow to himself.

The bell in the refectory had some time before announced the supper-hour. Psalm and grace were finished, and the brotherhood was already seated before the steaming millet porridge, when Gunzo at last came in with a radiant countenance. The dean silently pointed to a remote corner away from his customary seat; for he who missed the regular hour too often, was separated from the others as a punishment, and his wine was given to the poor. But without the least murmur Gunzo sat down, and drank his Belgian pump water, for his book was lying finished in his cell, and that made up to him for everything.

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When the meal was over, he invited some of his friends to come up to his cell, in as mysterious a way as if they were about to dig for some hidden treasure, and when they were all assembled, he read his work out to them. The monastery of St. Gallus, with its libraries, schools, and learned teachers, was far too famous in all Christendom for the disciples of St. Amandus not to listen to the whizzing of Gunzo's arrows with a secret joy. Wisdom and a blameless life are often far more offensive to the world than sin and wickedness. Therefore they nodded their hoary heads approvingly as Gunzo read out the choice bits.

"It would have been well before this to have taught these Helvetian bears a lesson!" said one. "Insolence joined to roughness does not deserve any gentler treatment."

Gunzo continued. "*Bene, optime, aristotelicissime!*" murmured the assembled monks, when he had ended.

"May the dish please you, Brother Akhar!" exclaimed another. "Belgian spice, to flavor the Helvetian cheese!"

The brother head cook, embracing Gunzo, actually wept with joy. Nothing so learned, profound, and beautiful, had ever gone out into the world before, from the cloister of St. Amandus. Only one of the brothers was standing motionless near the wall.

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"Well?" said Gunzo interrogatively.

"And where is charity?" softly asked the brother; and after these few words he relapsed again into silence. The reproach struck home.

"Thou art right, Hucbald," said he. "This want shall be supplied. Charity requires us to pray for our enemies. Therefore I will add a prayer for the poor fool at the end. That will have a good appearance, and impress all tender minds favorably. Ay?"

But the brother did not reply. It had become very late, and they all left the cell now on tip-toe. Gunzo tried to retain him who had spoken of charity, as he cared a good deal for his opinion; but Hucbald turned away and followed the others.

"Matthew, twenty-three, verse twenty-five," he murmured, when his foot had crossed the threshold. Nobody heard it.

Slumber that night, however, obstinately refused to close the eyes of Gunzo the learned. So he read the production of his industry over and over again. He soon knew in what place every word stood, and yet he could not withdraw his eyes from the well-known lines. At last he seized his pen, saying: "A more pious ending—so be it!" He reflected a while, pacing up and down his cell with slow measured steps. "It shall be done in hexameters, for who has ever before paid back an insult received in so worthy a manner?"

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So he sat down and wrote. He wished to write a prayer for his enemy, but then nobody can act contrary to his nature. Once more he glanced over the written pages. They were really too good! Then he penned the supplement. When the cock was announcing the dawn of day, this also was finished. Two dozen and a half of rattling monks' verses. That his thoughts by degrees diverged from the prayer for his enemy on himself and his glorious work was but a natural transition for a man gifted with so much self-esteem.

With complacent unction, he wrote down the five last lines:

"Go then into the world, my book; and wherever thou
findest
Shameful, slanderous tongues, which my glorious life
are defiling,
Crush them without remorse, and humble them with thy
just censure,
Until thy author one day shall enter the kingdom of
Heaven,
Such as is promised to him who has not buried his
talents."

The parchment was rough and resistant, so that he had to press the goose-quill in order to make it receive the letters.

The next day Gunzo packed up his epistle in a tin box, and this again in a linen bag. A bond-

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man of the monastery, who had slain his brother, had taken a vow of a pilgrimage to the grave of the twelve Saints, with his right arm chained to his right hip, and was to pray there until some heavenly sign of grace was shown to him. His way led up the Rhine. So Gunzo put the tin case round his neck, and a few weeks later it was delivered safe and sound into the hands of the gatekeeper at Reichenau. Gunzo knew his friends there well. Therefore he had dedicated the libel to them.

Moengal, the old parish priest, had also some business to transact in the monastery on that day. In the strangers' room sat the Belgian pilgrim. They had given him some fish-soup, which he managed to eat with much difficulty, his chains clinking whenever he lifted his arm.

"Thou hadst better go home again and marry the widow of the man thou hast slain," said Moengal. "That would be a far better expiation than to make a fool's journey into the wide world with your rattling chains."

The pilgrim shook his head silently, as if he thought that such chains might prove heavier still than any which the blacksmith could forge.

Moengal asked to be announced to the Abbot. "He is very busy with some book he is reading," was the answer. Nevertheless he was ushered into his presence.

"Sit down, parish priest," graciously said the

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Abbot. "I know that you are rather fond of salty and peppery things. Here's something for you."

He read out to him Gunzo's libel, which had just arrived. The old man listened attentively, but his eyebrows contracted and his nostrils expanded during the lecture.

When he had come to the description of Ekkehard's curly hair and fine shoes, the Abbot was nearly convulsed with laughter, but Moengal sat there, rigid and serious, and on his forehead a frown had gathered like clouds before a thunderstorm.

"Well do I reckon that his pride will be soundly whipped out of him!" said the Abbot. "Sublime! really sublime! And an abundance of knowledge. That will strike home, and can not be answered."

"But it can, though," grimly said the parish priest.

"And in what way?" eagerly asked the Abbot.

Moengal made a gesture of evil import. "A good stick from a holly bush, or a brave hazel wand, is all that's wanted, and then to go down the Rhine, until there is but an arm's-length left between the Suabian wood and the Italian writer's back. And then—" He concluded his speech pantomimically.

"You are somewhat rude, parish priest, and have no appreciation of learning," said the Abbot. "To be sure, such a treatise as that can only be written by a refined intellect. Respect him, I say!"

"Fine learning that, indeed!" exclaimed Moen-

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gal, who had worked himself into a downright rage. "‘Puffed-up lips and a bad and wicked heart are like an earthen pot covered with tinsel,’ says Solomon. Learned? Why, the wood in my parish is as learned as that, for it also repeats what you call out to it, and that is at least a melodious echo. We know these Belgian peacocks, which are also to be found, though, in other parts. Their feathers are stolen, and their singing, in spite of tail and rainbow colors behind, is hoarse and always will be hoarse, no matter what airs the creatures may give themselves. Before my recovery, I also believed that it was singing, instead of croaking, when a fellow puffed up his cheeks with grammar and dialectics, but we think differently now at Radolfszell!"

"I believe that it is time for you to think of going home, as the clouds are fast gathering over the lake," said the Abbot.

Then the parish priest found out that he had not chosen a suitable individual to whom to expound his healthy views on learning. So he took leave.

"For the matter of that, thou mightest as well have remained in thy monastery at Benchor on the Emerald Isle, thou Irish wooden-head," thought Abbot Wazmann, whilst bidding him farewell with evident coolness.

"Rudimann!" he called out through the passage, when Moengal was gone. Rudimann instantly made his appearance.

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"I suppose you remember the last vintage season," began the Abbot, "as well as a blow given to you by a certain milksop, to whom a fanciful Duchess is now about to give certain lands?"

"I remember the blow," replied Rudimann with a bashful smile, like a maiden who is questioned about her lover.

"That blow has been returned by some one, with a strong and unrelenting hand. You may be pleased. Read this," handing Gunzo's parchment to him.

"By your leave," said Rudimann, stepping up to the window. He had tasted many a noble wine in his life, during the time that he had occupied his present post of cellarer, but even on the day when the bishop of Cremona had sent him some jugs of sparkling brown Asti his countenance had not shone so radiantly as it did now.

"What a precious gift from above is extensive knowledge and a fine style," exclaimed he. "Brother Ekkehard is done for. He can not dare to show his face again."

"'Tis not gone quite so far yet," said the Abbot. "But then that which is not may yet happen in the future. The learned Brother Gunzo is helping us. His epistle must not be allowed to rot unread. So you can have some copies taken—better six than three. That fine young gentleman must be driven away from the Hohentwiel. I am not overfond of

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yellow-beaked birds who pretend to sing better than their elders. Some cold water, poured on his tonsure, will benefit him. We will send a note to our brother in St. Gall, urging him to command his return. How is it with the list of his sins?"

Rudimann slowly raised his left hand, and began to count on his fingers. "Shall I recount them? First he disturbed the peace of our monastery, during the vintage, by—"

"Stop," said the Abbot, "that is past and done away with. All that happened before the battle with the Huns is buried and forgotten. That is a law which the Burgundians made, and which we will adhere to also."

"Without the help of my fingers, then," said the cellarer. "The custodian of St. Gallus has become subject to haughtiness and insolence since the day on which he left his monastery. Without moving his lips to frame a greeting, he passes by brothers whose age and intellect ought to claim his reverence. Then he presumed to preach the sermon on the holy day when we beat the Huns, although such an important and solemn office ought to have been performed by one of the Abbots. Further, he presumed to baptize a heathenish prisoner, although such a baptism should have been superintended by the regular priest of the parish and not by one who ought to attend at the gate of the monastery of St. Gallus.

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"What may still arise out of the constant intercourse of the forward youth with his noble mistress, He who searcheth all hearts alone can tell! Already at the wedding-feast of that baptized heathen it was observed that he did not shun meetings with that beauteous dame in solitary places; and that he heaved frequent sighs, like a shot buck. Likewise it has been remarked with heartfelt sorrow that a Greek maiden, as fickle and unstable as a will-o'-the-wisp, is flickering about him; so that that which is left undone by the mistress may be finished by her handmaiden, of whose orthodoxy even one is not fully assured. Now, a frivolous woman is bitterer than death, according to the Scripture. She is a bait of the Evil One, and her heart is a net, and only he who pleases God can escape her wiles."

It was a most becoming and just thing for Rudimann, the patron of the maid Kerhildis, to be so well versed in the words of the Preacher.

"Enough," said the Abbot. "Chapter twenty-nine, treating of the calling back of absent brothers. It will do, and I have a sort of presentiment that the fickle lady will soon flutter about on her rock, like an old swallow whose nestling has been taken away. Good-by, sweetheart! . . . And Saspach will yet become ours!"

"Amen!" murmured Rudimann.

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CHAPTER XVIII

THE MISSION OF MASTER SPAZZO, THE CHAMBERLAIN

EARLY on a cool pleasant summer's day Ekkehard walked out of the castle gate into the breezy morning air. He had passed a sleepless night, during which he had paced up and down in his chamber. The Duchess had called up a host of wild thoughts in his heart, and in his head there was a buzzing and humming, as if a covey of wild ducks were flying about there. He shunned Dame Hadwig's presence, and yet longed every moment that he was away to be near her. The old, happy candor had taken wing. His ways had become strange and variable; in short, the time which has never been spared yet to mortal man, and which Godfrey of Strassburg describes as "an ever-present pain in a continual state of bliss," had come for him.

Before the night had quite set in a thunderstorm was raging outside. He had opened his little window, and enjoyed the fierce sheets of lightning flashing through the gathering darkness, and every now and then lighting up the shores of the lake;

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and he had laughed when night had triumphed again, and the peals of thunder reverberated amid the hills.

Now it was a fine sunny morning. Glistening dewdrops hung on the grass, and here and there an unmelted hailstone was lying in the shade. Quiet and peace were now reigning over hill and vale, but in the blasted cornfields the ears hung down their broken heads, for the hailstorm had ruined the fair, promising harvest. From the rocky hillsides mud-colored little brooklets were running down into the valley.

As yet nothing was stirring in the fields, for it was only just daybreak. In the distance, on the hilly ground which extends in undulating lines at the back of the Hohentwiel, a man was striding along. It was the Hunnic convent. He carried willow branches and all sorts of slings, and was just setting out on his work to wage war on the field-mice. As he walked along he whistled merrily on a lime-tree leaf, and looked the image of a happy bridegroom; for in the arms of the tall Friderun he had found new happiness.

"How are you?" mildly said Ekkehard when he passed by with a humble salutation. The Hun pointed up to the blue sky: "As if I were in heaven!" said he, gaily spinning round on one of his wooden shoes. Ekkehard turned his steps back again; but for a long while the whistling of the

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mouse-catcher could still be heard interrupting the silence around. At the foot of the hill there lay a piece of weather-beaten rock, over which an elder tree spread its boughs, richly laden with luxuriant white blossoms. Ekkehard sat down on it, and after dreamily gazing into the distance for some time, he drew out from under his habit a neatly bound little book, and began to read. It was neither a breviary nor the Psalter. It was called "The Song of Solomon," and it was not good for him to read it. To be sure, they had once taught him that the lily-scented song expressed the longing for the church, the true bride of the soul, and in his younger days he had studied it, undisturbed by gazel eyes and the dovelike cheeks and the waist, slender as the palm tree, of the Sulamite woman. But now—now he read it with other eyes. A soft dreaminess came over him.

"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" He looked up to the towers of the Hohentwiel, which were glittering in the first rays of the morning sun, and there found the answer.

And again he read: "I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." A stirring breeze shook

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down some of the white blossoms on the little book. Ekkehard did not shake them off. He had bent down his head, and was sitting there motionless.

Meanwhile, Cappan had cheerfully begun his daily labors. There was a field down in the plain, on the border of the lands belonging to the Hohen-twiel, where the field-mice had established their headquarters. The weasels were carrying off plenty of provisions for the winter, and the moles were digging their passages in the gravelly soil. To that spot Cappan had received orders to betake himself. Like a statesman in a rebellious province, he was to restore order and cleanse the land of all obnoxious subjects. The floods of the late thunderstorm had laid open the hidden refuges. He dug them up gently, and slew many a field-mouse before it was aware of it. Then he carefully prepared his various slings and traps, also putting down here and there some poisonous baits, which he had concocted out of the thorn apple and belladonna; and all the while that he was thus intent on these his murderous designs, he continued to whistle merrily, little knowing what terrible clouds were gathering over his head.

The land on which he was exercising his art bordered on some grounds that belonged to the monastery of Reichenau. There, where a forest of stately old oaks stretched their tops into the air,

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some straw-thatched roofs might be seen. These were the roofs of the Schlangenhof, which, together with many acres of wood and fields, belonged to the monastery. A pious widow had left it to St. Pirmin, in order to secure eternal bliss for her soul. They had let it to a farmer, who was rather a rough man with a thick, knotty skull, full of hard, stubborn thoughts. He had many men and maid-servants, as well as horses and cattle, and was altogether a thriving man, for he took good care that the copper-brown snakes which infested both court and stable were left unmolested. Their dish of milk in the stable corner was never allowed to remain empty, and in consequence they had got quite tame, and never harmed anybody. "These snakes are the blessing of the whole farm," the old man would often repeat.

For the last two days, however, the convent farmer had not enjoyed one single quiet hour; for the frequent thunderstorms made him very anxious about his crops. When three of them had passed by without doing any damage, he had a horse put to a cart, on which was placed a sack of last year's rye, and with that he drove over to the deacon of Singen. He, on seeing the cart approaching, grinned so as to show his big grinders, for he knew his customer well enough. His living was scanty, but out of the folly of mankind he yet made enough to butter his bread.

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The farmer had taken the sack of corn down from the cart, and said: "Master Ottfried, you have taken good care of me, and have prayed away the thunderstorms from my fields. Don't forget me if the thunder should come on again."

And the deacon replied: "I think you must have seen me standing under the church door, with my face turned toward the Schlangenhof, sprinkling the holy water three times toward the tempest, in the shape of the holy cross, besides saying the verse of the three holy nails. That drove away the clouds and hailstones fast enough, I can tell you! Your rye, my friend, would make excellent bread if a trifle of barley were added to it."

Then the convent farmer returned home, and was just thinking of filling a smaller sack with barley, as an additional, well-deserved present for his advocate with Heaven, when again some black and threatening clouds became visible. While they were looming dark and terrible over the oak wood a whitish-gray, smaller cloud hurried after them. It had five points, like the fingers of a hand, and swelled and shot forth sheets of lightning, and soon a hailstorm, far worse than any previous ones, came down. The convent farmer had at first stood confidently under his porch, thinking that the deacon of Singen would again drive it away, but when the hailstones began pelting his cornfields, causing the ears to fall like soldiers in a battle, he

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struck his clenched fist on the oaken table, calling out, "May that cursed liar at Singen be damned!"

In the height of despair at the deacon's prayers having failed, he now tried an old traditional remedy of the Hegau. Tearing down some branches from the nearest oak tree, he plucked off the leaves, and putting these into his venerable old wedding-coat, he hung it up on the mighty oak tree which overspread his house. But the merciless hailstones continued to beat down the corn, in spite of wedding-coat and oak leaves. Like a statue, the convent farmer stood there, with his eyes riveted on the bundle in the air, hoping that the wind which would drive the thunderstorm away would come out of it—but it came not! Then, biting his lips and with contracted eyebrows, he walked back into the house. Almost heart-broken with grief, he threw himself into a chair before the table, and for some time he sat there without uttering a word. When at last he spoke, it was to pronounce an awful curse. This, with the convent farmer, was a change for the better.

His head servant timidly ventured to approach him. He was of gigantic stature, but before his master he stood as timid as a child.

"If I only knew the witch!" exclaimed the farmer. "The weather-witch! the cursed old hag! She should not have shaken out her skirts

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over the Schlangenhof in vain. . . . May her tongue wither in her mouth!"

"Need it have been a witch?" said the head servant. "Since the woman of the wood has been driven away from the Hohenkrähen, no other has dared to show her face here."

"Hold thy tongue until thou art asked!" fiercely growled the farmer.

The man remained standing there, well knowing that his turn would come. After some time the old man gruffly said: "What dost thou know?"

"I know what I know," replied the other, with a sly expression.

Again there ensued a pause. The convent farmer looked out of the window. The harvest was destroyed. He turned round.

"Speak," cried he.

"Did you notice that strange gray cloud sailing past the dark ones?" said the man. "What else can it have been but the cloud-ship? Somebody has sold our corn to the owners of that ship."

The convent farmer crossed himself, as if he wanted to prevent his saying more.

"I have heard it said by my grandmother," continued the head servant. "She has often heard people speak about it in Alsatia, when the thunderstorms came from over the Odilienberg. The ship comes from a land that is called Magonia, and is always white, and sails on black clouds. Fasolt

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and Mermuth sit in it, and throw down the hail-stones on the fields, since the great weather wizard has given them the power to do so. Then they lift up our corn into their ship, and sail back to Magonia, where they are well paid for it. To be on good terms with the cloud-sailors is more profitable than the reading of masses. We shall have nothing but the husks this year."

The convent farmer became thoughtful. Then he suddenly seized the head servant by the collar, and, shaking him violently, cried, "Who?" But the man in reply put one of his fingers up to his lips. It had become late.

At the same early hour when Cappan had met Ekkehard, the convent farmer, accompanied by his servant, was walking through the fields to look at the damage. Neither of them said a word. The loss in crops was considerable, but they did not fail to observe that the land on the other side had suffered far less. It was as if the oak wood had been the boundary line of the hailstorm.

On a neighboring piece of land Cappan was performing his duties. He had finished setting his traps, and thought he would allow himself some rest. So he drew from his pocket some bacon and a slice of bread, which was as soft and white as the newly fallen snow, and looked so tempting that he could not help thinking of his spouse with deep gratitude for having provided him with such food.

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Further, he thought about many another thing which had occurred since their wedding, and he cast a longing look up to the larks, as if he wanted them to fly over to the Hohenstoffeln to carry some tender messages there, and again he felt so light-some and happy that he cut a mighty caper into the air.

His slender spouse not being present just then, he thought of giving himself a treat by lying down full length on the ground while he ate his food; for at home he had until then always been obliged to sit down, little as he liked it.

Just at that moment he remembered that Friderun, to call down a blessing on his work, had taught him to pronounce some words, which were to exorcise the vermin, and had exhorted him very earnestly not to forget saying them. His breakfast would never have tasted well if he had not obeyed this injunction.

On the border of the field there was a stone on which a half-moon was engraven, the sign of Dame Hadwig's ownership. He stepped up to it, and pulling off his wooden shoe from his right foot, he stood barefoot and stretched out his arms toward the wood. The farmer and his man, who were walking among the trees, stopped at this sight, but Cappan did not observe them and pronounced the words which Friderun had taught him.

"Aius sanctus, cardia cardiani!" Mouse and she-

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mouse, weasel and mole, I bid ye all to vanish from the fields and meads below; and may fever, plague, and death follow you where'er ye go! *Afrias, aestrias, palamiasit!*"

Hidden behind some bulky oak trees, the convent farmer and his companion had watched the exorcism. They now approached stealthily. "*Afrias, aestrias, palamiasit!*" said Cappan for the second time, when a blow from behind hit him right on the neck, so that he fell down. Strange, unintelligible words entered his ears, and before he had recovered from his surprise four fists were lustily belaboring his back, like flails on a barn floor.

"Out with it, thou corn murderer!" shrieked the convent farmer. "What has the Schlangenhof ever done to thee, thou weather-maker, mice-catcher, rake-hell?"

Cappan gave no answer. The poor fellow was perfectly bewildered, but this only angered the old man the more.

"Look into his eyes and see whether they are bleared, and if things are reflected wrongly in them," he called out to the head servant. The latter obeyed, and spoke truthfully.

"'Tis not in the eyes," said he.

"Then lift up his arm!"

He tore off the upper garment from the prostrate man, and examined his arms very carefully;

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for they who held communion with evil spirits always bore some marks on the body. But they found nothing whatever on the poor wretch except some scars of old wounds. This fact had almost restored him to favor in their eyes, for folks were then quick and changeable in their passions, as an historian of those days informs us. Just at that moment, however, the serving-man's eyes fell on the ground, where a large stag-beetle was crawling along. His wings shone with violet-blackish hue, and the reddish horns were proudly raised, like a stag's antlers. He had witnessed the ill-treatment which Cappan had received, and was going to continue his way, not having liked it.

The head servant started back, affrighted.

"The thunder beetle!" exclaimed he.

"The thunder beetle!" cried the convent farmer likewise, and now Cappan was lost. That he, together with the beetle, had made the storm, was now beyond all doubt, for the stag-beetle was then believed to attract thunder and lightning.

"Confess and repent, thou heathenish dog!" said the farmer, searching for his knife; but here an idea struck him and he continued, "He shall meet with his punishment on the grave of his brothers. To revenge them he has brought down the hail-storm."

The servant had meanwhile smashed the stag-beetle between two large pebbles, which he after-

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ward buried in the ground. Together they now laid hands on Cappan, dragging him over the field to the Hunnic mound, and there bound fast his hands and feet. This being done, the man ran over to the Schlangenhof to call his fellow servants. Wild and bloodthirsty they came. Some of them had danced at Cappan's wedding, but this did not in the least prevent their going out now to stone him.

Cappan began to collect his scattered senses. What he was accused of he could not guess, but he understood well enough that his life was in great danger. Therefore he now uttered a shriek which rent the air, wild and complaining, like the death-cry of a wounded horse, and awakened Ekkehard from his reverie under the elder tree. He recognized the voice of his godchild and looked down. A second time Cappan's cry rose up to him, and then Ekkehard forgot Solomon's song, and hurried down the valley. He came in the nick of time. They had placed Cappan with his back toward the piece of rock covering the mound, and were forming a semicircle round him. The convent farmer explained how he had caught him in the very act of weather-making, and then they unanimously agreed that he should be stoned to death.

Into this grim assembly rushed Ekkehard. The ecclesiastics of those days were less deluded than

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they were a few hundred years later, when thousands lost their lives by fire on account of similar accusations, when the state signed the death-warrant, and the church gave its blessing thereto. Ekkehard, though convinced of the existence of witchcraft, had himself once copied the treatise of the pious Bishop Agobard, written to disprove the nonsensical popular superstition of weather-making. Indignant wrath gave eloquence to his speech.

“What are ye about, ye misguided men, that ye intend to judge, when ye ought to pray that ye may not be judged yourselves! If the man has sinned, then wait till the new moon, when the parish priest at Radolfszell will be holding court against all malefactors. There let seven men under oath accuse him of the forbidden practise, according to the laws of the emperor and of the church.”

But they of the Schlangenhof would not heed his words. A threatening murmur ran through their ranks.

Then it occurred to Ekkehard to strike another chord in their rough minds.

“And do you really believe, you sons of the land of saints, of Suabian soil, which the Lord has been pleased to look upon with gracious eyes, that such a poor, miserable Hun could have the power to command the clouds? Do you think that the clouds would obey him? That a brave Hegau

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flash of lightning would not rather have split his head, to punish him for having dared to meddle with it?"

This last reason had almost convinced the native pride of the men, but the convent farmer cried out:

"The thunder beetle! The thunder beetle! We saw it with our eyes, crawling about his feet!"

Then the cry of "stone him to death!" was again raised. A first stone was hurled at the unfortunate Hun, making his blood flow. Upon this, Ekkehard bravely threw himself in front of his godson, shielding him with his own body.

This had its effect.

The men of the Schlangenhof looked at each other dumfounded, until one of them turned round to go away, and the others following his example, the convent farmer was soon left standing there all alone.

"You are taking the part of the land-destroyer!" he cried angrily, but on Ekkehard not giving an answer, he likewise dropped the stone from his hand, and went away grumbling.

Poor Cappan found himself in a most pitiable condition; for on a back which has been under the treatment of Allemannic peasants' fists, "no grass will grow again so easily," as the expression is in those parts.

The stone had caused a wound on the head

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which was bleeding profusely. Ekkehard first washed his head with some rain-water, made the sign of the cross over it, to stop the bleeding, and then dressed the wound as well as he could. He thought of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The wounded man looked gratefully up at him. Slowly Ekkehard led him up to the castle, and he had to persuade him before he would take his arm. The foot that had been wounded in the late battle also began hurting him again, so that he limped on with suppressed groans.

On the Hohentwiel their arrival was the cause of great and general excitement, for everybody liked the Hun. The Duchess descended into the courtyard, bestowing a friendly nod on Ekkehard on account of his kindness and compassion. The trespass of the monastery's vassal against her subject raised her just resentment.

"This shall not be forgotten," said she. "Be comforted, my poor mouse-catcher, for they shall pay thee damages for thy wounded pate that will equal a dowry. And for the broken peace of the realm we shall decree the highest possible fine. A few pounds of silver shall not be sufficient. These lay convent people grow to be as insolent as their clerical masters!"

But the most indignant of all was Master Spazzo, the chamberlain.

"Did I for this reason withhold my sword from

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his head, when he lay wounded before me that those clodhoppers of the Schlangenhof should pave it with their stones? And what if he was once our enemy? Now he is baptized and I am his godfather, and bound to take care of the welfare of his soul as well as of his body. Be of good cheer, godchild!" cried he, rattling his sword on the stone flags, "for as soon as thy scratch has been mended, I shall accompany thee on thy first walk, and then we will settle accounts with the convent farmer. Hail and thunder, that we will! Yes, we'll make the chips fly off his head! With those farmers things can not go on any longer in that way. The fellows carry shields and arms like noblemen, and instead of hunting like peasants, they keep dogs, broken in for boars and bears; and they blow on their bugles as if they were the lords of the creation. Whenever a man carries his head higher than the rest, one may be sure that he is a farmer!"

"Where was the offense committed?" asked the Duchess.

"They dragged him from the boundary stone with the raised half-moon to the Hunnic mound," said Ekkehard.

"Consequently the deed has been done on our very own ground and territory," indignantly exclaimed the Duchess. "That is too much! Master Spazzo, you must to horse!"

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"We must to horse!" echoed the chamberlain fiercely.

"And you shall demand even to-day that the Abbot of Reichenau pay us both damages and fine for the peace which has been broken, as well as giving us all possible satisfaction. Our sovereign rights shall not be trampled upon by monastic insolence!"

"Shall not be trampled upon by monastic insolence!" repeated Master Spazzo, still fiercer than before.

Seldom had he entered on a mission which was more to his taste. "We will mount, Sir Abbot!" cried he, going up to his room to make the necessary preparations.

His green velvet waistcoat and gold-bordered chamberlain's mantle he quietly left in his wardrobe, choosing instead an old and shabby gray suit. After having donned this, he put on the large greaves which he had worn on the day of the battle. Fastening on them the biggest spurs he possessed, he trampled up and down a few times, to try their effect. Finally he stuck three waving feathers in his steel cap, and hung his sword over his shoulders. Thus arrayed, he came down into the courtyard.

"Do look at me, most lovely maiden Praxedis," said he to the Greek, "and tell me what sort of expression my face wears now?" He had pushed

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the steel cap toward his left ear, and haughtily turned his head over his right shoulder.

"A most insolent one, indeed, Sir Chamberlain!" was the reply.

"Then 'tis all right," said Master Spazzo, mounting his steed. A moment later he cantered out by the castle gate, so that he made the sparks fly about, having the pleasant conviction that this time haughtiness was his bounden duty.

On the way he practised the part he was going to act. The storm had thrown down a fir tree, to the roots of which the torn-up earth was still clinging. Its mighty branches blocked up the way.

"Out of the way, ecclesiastical blockhead!" called out Master Spazzo to the fir tree, and when it did not move, he drew his sword.

"Forward, Falada!" spurring his steed so that it jumped over the tree in one flying leap. Whilst the animal was performing this feat Master Spazzo gave a good cut at the branches, so as to make the twigs fly about.

In less than an hour and a half he had reached the cloister gate. The small strip of land which at low tide linked the shore with the island was now above water, thus affording a passage. A serving brother opened the door for him. It was about dinner-time. The imbecile Heribald quickly came out of the convent garden to satisfy his curiosity with regard to the strange horseman.

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He pressed up close to the horse when Master Spazzo dismounted. The watch-dog, furiously barking, dragged at his chain, to get at the steed, so that the animal reared back, and Master Spazzo almost came to grief. When he had safely alighted, he seized his scabbard, and dealt Heribald a blow over the back.

"It is not meant for you," cried he, stroking his beard, "it is for the watch-dog. Pass it on!"

Heribald stood there, perfectly aghast, and rubbed his shoulder.

"Holy Pirminius!" wailed he.

"To-day there is no holy Pirminius whatever," said Master Spazzo in a most decisive tone.

Then Heribald laughed, as if he knew his customer now.

"Heigho, gracious lord, the Huns have also been here, and there was nobody but Heribald to receive them; but they did not speak to him so wickedly as that."

"The Huns are no ducal chamberlains, fool!" Master Spazzo replied haughtily.

In Heribald's weak mind the idea began to dawn that the Huns might not be the worst guests on German ground. He held his tongue, however, and returned to the garden, where he plucked some sage leaves and rubbed his back with them.

Master Spazzo strode over the cloister yard to the gate, which, by way of a cross-passage, led into

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the interior. He had assumed his heaviest tread. The bell that announced dinner was just ringing. One of the brothers now came quickly across the yard. Him Master Spazzo now seized by his garment.

"Call down the Abbot!" said he. The monk looked at him in mute astonishment; then, casting a side look at the chamberlain's worn hunting-suit, he replied: "It is the hour for our midday meal. If you are invited, which, however, seems rather doubtful to me"—this with an ironical look at Master Spazzo's exterior. But he was spared the end of his sentence, for the chamberlain dealt the hungry brother such a genuine cuff that he was sent reeling into the yard again, like a well-propelled shuttle-cock. The midday sun shone on the smooth tonsure of the prostrate monk.

The Abbot had already been informed of the violent assault which the convent farmer had made on one of the Duchess's subjects. He now heard the noise in the courtyard, and on stepping up to the window, he was just in time to see the pious brother Ivo sent flying out into the yard. "Happy is he who knows the secret causes of things," says Virgil, and Abbot Wazmann was in that enviable condition. He had seen Master Spazzo's feathers nodding over at him with a threatening aspect from out the sombre cross-passage.

"Call down the Abbot!" was again shouted up

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from the courtyard, so that the panes of the little cell-windows vibrated.

Meanwhile, the soup was getting cold in the refectory, so that the assembled brotherhood at last fell to, without waiting any longer for the Abbot.

Abbot Wazmann had sent for Rudimann, the cellarer. "All this annoyance we surely owe to that jackanapes of St. Gall! Oh, Gunzo, Gunzo! No one ought to wish ill to his neighbor, but still I can not help revolving in my mind whether our strong-handed yeomen had not done better to hurl their stones at that hypocrite Ekkehard rather than at the Hunnic wizard!"

A monk now diffidently entered the Abbot's room.

"You are desired to come down," said he in low accents. "There is somebody downstairs who shouts and gives commands, as though he were of high station."

Then the Abbot said to Rudimann, the cellarer: "It must be very bad weather with the Duchess. I know the chamberlain, and am aware that he is a perfect weather-cock. Whenever his mistress wears a smile round her haughty lips, then he laughs with his whole face, and when clouds have gathered on her brow, then he will explode like a thunderstorm.

"And the lightning precedes the thunder,"

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added Rudimann. Heavy steps were now heard approaching.

"There's no time to be lost," said the Abbot. "Set out as quickly as you can, Cellarer, and express our deep regret to the Duchess. Take some silver out of the convent treasury as smart-money for the wounded man, and say that we will have prayers offered for his recovery. Get along! you are his godfather and a clever man."

"It will be rather a difficult task," said Rudimann. "She is sure to be downright exasperated."

"Take her some present," said the Abbot. "Children and women are easily bribed."

"What sort of a present?" Rudimann was about to ask, when the door was thrown open, and Master Spazzo came in. His face wore the right expression.

"By the life of my Duchess!" exclaimed he. "Has the Abbot of this rats' nest poured lead into his ears, or has the gout got hold of his feet, that he does not come down to receive his visitors?"

"We were taken by surprise," said the Abbot. "Let me welcome you now." He lifted his right forefinger to give him the blessing.

"I need no such welcome!" returned Master Spazzo. "The Devil is the patron saint of this day. We have been insulted, grossly insulted! We exact a fine, two hundred pounds of silver at the least. Out with it! Murder and rebellion!

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The sovereign rights shall not be trampled upon by monastic insolence! We are an ambassador!"

He rattled his spurs on the floor.

"Excuse me," said the Abbot, "we could not recognize the ambassador's garb in your gray jacket."

"By the camel's-hair coat of St. John the Baptist!" flared up Master Spazzo, "if I were to come to you in my shirt, the garment would be good enough to appear in as a herald before you in your black cowls!"

He put on his helmet again, from which the feathers seemed to nod triumphantly. "Pay me at once, so that I can go back again. The air is bad here, very bad indeed."

"Allow me," said the Abbot, "but we never permit a guest to depart in anger from our island. You are sharp and urgent, because you have not yet dined. Don't disdain a meal such as the monastery can offer, and let us talk of business afterward."

That a man, in return for his rudeness, was kindly pressed to stay to dinner made some impression on the chamberlain's mind. He took off his helmet again. "The sovereign rights shall not be trampled upon by monastic insolence," muttered he once more; but the Abbot pointed over to the open cloister kitchen. The fair-haired scullion was turning the spit before the fire and smacking

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his lips, for a lovely smell of the roast meat had entered his nostrils just then. Some covered dishes, calling up pleasant anticipations, were standing in the background, while a monk, bearing a huge wine-jug, was just coming up from the cellar. The aspect was too tempting to resist any longer. So Master Spazzo forgot his frown, and accepted the invitation.

When he had arrived at the third dish, his insulting speeches became more scarce, and when the red wine of Meersburg was sparkling in the beaker, they ceased entirely. The red wine of Meersburg was good.

Meanwhile Rudimann rode out of the convent gate. The fisherman of Ermatingen had caught a gigantic salmon, which lay, fresh and glittering, in the vaults below. This fish had been selected by Rudimann as a suitable present for appeasing the Duchess. Before he set out, however, he had still something to do in the copying room of the monastery. A lay-brother was to accompany him, with the huge fish, packed up in straw, lying before him on the saddle. Master Spazzo had ridden over in the haughtiest fashion, whereas Rudimann now assumed his most humble expression. He spoke diffidently, and in low accents, when he asked for the Duchess. "She is in the garden," was the reply. "And my pious brother in the Lord Ekkehard?" asked the cellarer.

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"He has accompanied the wounded Cappan to his cottage on the Hohenstoffeln, where he is nursing him, so that he is not expected home before night."

"This I am truly sorry to hear," said Rudimann, with an evil expression of spite hovering about his lips. He then had the salmon unpacked, and put on the granite table in the middle of the courtyard. The tall lime tree threw its cool shade over the glistening scales of the royal fish, and it was as if its large eye had still retained the power of sight, and were longingly looking away from the green branches to the blue waves of its native element.

The fish measured above six feet in length, and Praxedis screamed outright when its straw covering was taken off. "He does not come home before nightfall," muttered Rudimann, breaking off a strong branch from the tree, a piece of which he put between the jaws of the fish, so that it remained with mouth wide open. With some of the leaves he carefully lined the inside, and then diving down into his breast-pocket, he drew out thence the parchment leaves of Gunzo's libel. Rolling them first neatly up, he then stuck them between the jaws of the salmon.

With unfeigned astonishment, Praxedis had been watching the strange proceeding.

The Duchess was now seen approaching them.

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Humbly, Rudimann walked forward to meet her, and imploring her indulgence for the convent's bondsman, he told her how sorry the Abbot was; spoke with appreciation of the wounded man; expressed his doubts about the possibility of weather-making; and in fact spoke on the whole with tolerable success.

"And may an unworthy present show you at least the good will of your ever faithful Reichenau," concluded he, stepping aside, so that the salmon could shine out in full glory. The Duchess smiled, half reconciled already; and now her eye caught the parchment roll. "And that?" said she, inquiringly.

"The latest production of literature!" said Rudimann. With a deep bow he then took leave, and remounting his mule, hastily set out again on his way home.

The red wine of Meersburg was good, and Master Spazzo was not accustomed to treat drinking as a thing that could be done quickly. He persevered before the wine jug, like a general besieging a city; and sitting immovably on his bench, drank like a man, silently, but much, leaving all loud demonstrations to younger persons.

"The red wine is the most sensible institution of the monastery. Have you got more of it in the cellar?" he said to the Abbot when the first jug was emptied. His wanting to drink more was

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meant as politeness, and a sign of reconciliation. So the second jug was brought up.

"Without injuring our sovereign right!" said he grimly, when he knocked his beaker against that of the Abbot. "Certainly, certainly," replied the latter with a queer side look.

The fifth hour of the evening had thus come, and the sounds of the bell were floating through the monastery.

"Excuse me," said the Abbot, "we must now go to vespers; will you come with us?"

"I prefer waiting for you here," replied Master Spazzo, casting a look into the long neck of the wine jug. It contained ample provision for at least another hour. So he let the monks sing their vespers, and drank on, all alone.

Again an hour had elapsed, when he tried to remember for what reason he had ridden over to the monastery, but the fact was that he could not recollect it any more very clearly. The Abbot came back now.

"How did you enjoy yourself?" asked he.

"Very well," said Master Spazzo. The jug was empty.

"I do not know—" began the Abbot.

"Certainly!" said Master Spazzo, nodding his head. Then the third jug was brought.

Meanwhile Rudimann had returned home from his expedition. The sun was far inclining to the

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west; the sky was all aglow and faint purple gleams of light were falling through the narrow windows on the carousing party.

When Master Spazzo drank another bumper with the Abbot, the red wine glistened like fiery gold in the cup, and he saw an aureole of light flickering round the Abbot's head. He tried to collect his scattered senses. "By the life of Hadwig," said he solemnly, "who are you?"

The Abbot did not understand him.

"What did you say?" asked he. Then Master Spazzo recognized the voice. "Ah so," cried he, striking the oak table with his fist. "The sovereign rights shall not be trampled upon by monastic insolence!"

"Certainly not," rejoined the Abbot.

Then the chamberlain felt a spasmodic pain in the forehead, which he knew very well, and which he used to call "*the waker*." The waker came only when he was sitting behind the wine jug, and whenever it announced itself it was a sure signal that half an hour later the tongue would be paralyzed, and speech refuse to come. If "the waker" came for the second time, then the feet also were threatened with temporary paralysis. So he arose.

"These cowl-bearing monks shall not have the satisfaction of witnessing how their wine shuts up the mouth of a ducal chamberlain," thought he. He stood quite erect on his feet.

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"Stop," said the Abbot, "we must not forget the parting draft!"

Then the fourth jug was brought. It is true that Master Spazzo had arisen, but then, between rising and going, a good many things may yet happen. He drank again, but when he wanted to put down his beaker, he placed it in the empty air, so that it fell down and broke to pieces. At this, Master Spazzo got furious; whilst many a thought was crossing in, and confusing his muddled brains.

"Where have you got him?" cried he to the Abbot.

"Whom?"

"The convent farmer! Out with him, the vulgar peasant, who tried to murder my godchild!" He threateningly advanced a few paces toward the Abbot, making only *one* false step.

"He is at the Schlangenhof," smilingly said the Abbot, "and I willingly deliver him up to you; only you must be pleased to fetch him from there yourself."

"Murder and rebellion! We will fetch him!" roared Master Spazzo, rattling his sword, as he strode toward the door. "We will drag him out of his very bed, the rascal! And when we have got him, by the knapsack of St. Gallus, if he—then—I can tell you—"

This speech was never ended, as his tongue

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stood still now, like the sun at Joshua's bidding during the battle with the Amorites.

He stretched out his hand for the Abbot's cup, and drained it. But his speech did not return. A sweet placid smile now settled on the chamberlain's lips. He stepped up to the Abbot to embrace him.

"Friend and brother! much beloved old wine-jug! what if I were to dig out one of thine eyes?" he tried to say with stammering tongue, but he could only utter some unintelligible sounds. He pressed the Abbot vehemently to his bosom, treading on his feet at the same time with his heavy boots.

Abbot Wazmann had already been deliberating within himself whether he should not offer a bed for the night to his exhausted guest, but the embrace and the pain in his toes changed his hospitable designs, and he took care that the chamberlain set out on his return.

His horse stood ready saddled in the cloister yard, where the weak-minded Heribald was sneaking about. He had fetched himself a large piece of tinder from the kitchen, which he intended to light and then to stick in the nostrils of the chamberlain's horse, thus to revenge himself for the blow which he had received. Master Spazzo, having scraped together the last remains of his dignity, now made his appearance. A servant with a

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burning torch lighted him on his way. The Abbot had taken leave of him at the upper gate.

Master Spazzo then bestrode his faithful steed Falada, but he was no sooner mounted than he glided down again on the other side. Heribald who was near, hurried up to catch him in his arms, and as he did so his bristly beard grazed the chamberlain's forehead.

"Art thou here also, my wise King Solomon?" stammered Master Spazzo. "Be my friend!" kissing him. Then Heribald threw away his cinder and placed his foot on it.

"Heigho, gracious Lord!" cried he. "May you get home safe and sound! You have come to us in a different manner from the Huns, and therefore your departure is different also. And yet, they too, understood how to drink wine."

Master Spazzo, who had recovered his seat, pressed the steel cap down on his head, and tightly grasped the reins. Something was still weighing on his mind, and made him struggle with his heavy tongue. At last he recovered some of his lost strength. He lifted himself in the stirrups, and his voice now obeyed.

"And the sovereign rights shall not be trampled upon by monastic insolence!" cried he, so that his voice rang loudly through the dark and silent cloister yard.

At the same time, Rudimann informed the Ab-

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bot of the success which his mission had had with the Duchess.

Master Spazzo rode away. To the servant who had accompanied him with the torch, he threw a gold ring, which induced the torch-bearer to go on with him over the narrow causeway across the lake.

He had safely reached the mainland, and the cool night air was fanning his heated face. He burst out laughing. The reins he still held tightly in his right hand. The moon was shining brightly, while dark clouds were gathering round the peaks of the Helvetian mountains. Master Spazzo now entered the dark fir wood. Loudly and clearly, at measured intervals, the cuckoo's voice was heard through the silence around.

Master Spazzo laughed again. Was it some pleasant recollection or longing hope for the future which made him smile so sweetly?

He stopped his horse.

"When will the wedding be?" he called out in the direction where the cuckoo was sitting on its tree. He counted the calls, but the cuckoo was indefatigable. Master Spazzo had already reached number twelve, when his patience began to wane.

"Hold thy tongue, confounded bird!" cried he. But the cuckoo called out for the thirteenth time.

"Five-and-forty years we have got already," angrily exclaimed Master Spazzo, "and thirteen

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more would make it fifty-eight. That would be a nice time, indeed!"

The cuckoo sang out for the fourteenth time.

Here, another woke up, and also raised its voice; a third followed, and now there began a chorus of clamoring cuckoo voices around the tipsy chamberlain, so that all counting became impossible.

His patience left him entirely.

"Miserable liars and breakers of marriages, that's what you are!" cried he furiously. "Would that the devil might take you off altogether!"

He spurred his horse on to a quicker pace. The wood became thicker, and heavy clouds were sailing toward the moon. It was intensely dark; the pine trees had assumed a strange, weird look, and everything was silent around. Willingly would Master Spazzo now have listened to the voice of the cuckoo, but the nightly disturber of peace had flown away, and the solitary rider began to shiver.

An unshapely cloud now stealthily approached the moon, and soon covered her up entirely. Then Master Spazzo recollected that his nurse had told him in his early infancy, how the bad wolf Hati and Monagarm the moon dog persecuted the radiant Aster. Looking up, he clearly recognized both wolf and moon dog in the sky. They had just taken hold with their teeth of the gentle comforter of belated travelers; Master Spazzo was convulsed with pity. He drew his sword.

Ekkehard

"*Vince luna*: conquer, oh moon!" cried he, at the top of his voice, and rattling his sword against his greaves. "*Vince luna, vince luna!*"

His cries were loud, and his jingling metal sounded fierce enough, but the cloud-monsters did not loosen their hold on the moon; only the chamberlain's horse became frightened, and galloped at full speed through the dark wood with him.

When Master Spazzo awoke on the next morning, he found himself lying at the foot of the Hunnic mound. His mantle was near him, on the ground, while his black steed Falada was indulging in a morning walk, at some distance. The saddle was hanging down on one side, and the reins were torn. Falada, however, was eating the young grass and flowers with evident enjoyment. Slowly the exhausted chamberlain lifted his head, and looked about yawning. The convent tower of Reichenau was mirrored in the distant lake, as peacefully as if nothing whatever had happened. He tore up a bunch of grass, and held the dewy blades to his forehead. "*Vince luna!*" said he with a sickly smile. He had a racking headache.

Ekkehard

CHAPTER XIX

BURKHARD THE CLOISTER PUPIL

RUDIMANN the cellarer was no bad logician. A roll of parchment sheets in the jaws of a salmon must beget curiosity. While Master Spazzo had been drinking the cloister wine, his mistress and Praxedis sat in their private room, spelling out Gunzo's libel. Ekkehard's pupils had learned enough Latin to understand the chief part, and what remained grammatically obscure they guessed at; what they could not guess, they interpreted as well as they could. Praxedis was indignant.

"Is the race of scholars then everywhere like that at Byzantium?" exclaimed she. "First, a gnat is metamorphosed into an elephant, and then a great war is made against the self-created monster! The present from the Reichenau is as sour as vinegar," puckering up her lovely mouth just as when she had tasted Wiborad's crab-apples.

Dame Hadwig was beset by strange feelings. A certain something told her that the spirit which pervaded Gunzo's libel was not a good one, and yet she felt some satisfaction at Ekkehard's humiliation.

Ekkehard

"I think that he has deserved this reprimand," said she.

Then Praxedis stood up: "Our good teacher needs many a reprimand, but then that should be our business. If we manage to cure him of his shyness and awkwardness, then we shall have done him a good service; but if one who carries a beam in his own eye reproaches his neighbor with the mote in his—that is a shame! The wicked monks have sent this to slander him. May I throw it out of the window, gracious mistress?"

"We have neither requested you to complete Ekkehard's education, nor to throw a present we have received out of the window," sharply said the Duchess. So Praxedis held her peace.

The Duchess could not tear away her thoughts so easily from the elegant libel. Her ideas with respect to the fair-haired monk had undergone a great change since the day on which he carried her over the cloister courtyard. Not to be understood in a moment of intense feeling is like being disdained. The sting remains forever in the heart. Whenever her eyes now chanced to light on him, it did not make her heart beat any the quicker. Sometimes it was pity which made her gaze kindly on him again, but not that sweet pity out of which love springs, like the lily out of the cool soil. It contained a bitter grain of contempt.

Through Gunzo's libel, even Ekkehard's learn-

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ing, which the women until then had been wont to treat with great respect, was laid prostrate in the dust—so what was there now left to admire? The silent working and dreaming of his soul was not understood by the Duchess, and a delicate timidity is but too often considered folly by others. His going out into the fields in the fresh morning to read Solomon's song came too late. He should have done that the previous autumn. . . .

Evening had come.

"Has Ekkehard returned home yet?" asked the Duchess.

"No," said Praxedis. "Neither has Master Spazzo returned."

"Then take yonder candlestick," said Dame Hadwig, "and carry up the parchment leaves to Ekkehard's tower. He must not remain ignorant of the works of his clerical brothers."

The Greek maid obeyed, but unwillingly. In the closet up in the tower the air was close and hot. Books and other things were strewn about in picturesque disorder. On the oak table the gospel of St. Matthew lay opened at the following verses:

"But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.

"Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

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"And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John the Baptist's head on a charger."

The priestly stole, the Duchess's Christmas gift to Ekkehard, lay beside it. Its golden fringes were hanging over the little bottle with the water from the Jordan, which the blind Thieto had given him.

Praxedis pushed back the other things, placing Gunzo's libel on the table. When she had arranged everything she felt sorry. Just about to go, she turned back once more, opened the window, and, gathering a branch of the luxuriant ivy which was winding its garlands round the tower, she threw it over the parchment leaves.

Ekkehard came home very late. He had been nursing the wounded Cappan, but had found it far harder work to comfort his tall spouse. After the first wailing was over and her tears had been dried, her speech until sunset had been nothing but one great curse against the convent farmer; and when she raised her strong arms and spoke of scratching his eyes out, of pouring henbane into his ears, and breaking his teeth, while her long brown tresses threateningly fluttered in the air, it needed a great effort to quiet her.

Yet he had succeeded at last.

In the silence of night Ekkehard read the leaves which the Greek maid had put on his table. His

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hand played with a wild rose, which he had culled in the fir wood when riding home, while his eyes took in the spiteful attacks of the Italian scholar.

"How is it," thought he, inhaling the soft fragrance of the flower, "that so much that is written with ink can not deny its origin? All ink is made of the gall-nut, and all gall-nuts spring from the poisonous sting of the wasp."

With a serene countenance he finally laid aside the yellow parchment sheets. "A good work! an industrious, good work! Well, the peewit is also an important personage among the feathered tribe, but the nightingale does not heed its singing."

He slept very well after he had read it.

On coming back from the castle chapel the next morning he met Praxedis in the courtyard.

"How are you, venerable baptizer of Hunnic idolaters?" said she lightly. "I am really very anxious about you. I dreamt that a big brown sea-crab had swum up the Rhine, and from the Rhine into the Bodensee, and thence he came up to our castle; and he had a pair of sharp pincers, and with them he pinched you very badly. The sea-crab's name was Gunzo. Say, have you many more such good friends?"

Ekkehard smiled.

"Most likely I do not please many a one who does not please me either," said he. "He who comes into contact with sooty kettles easily gets black himself."

Ekkehard

"You, however, seem to be wholly indifferent about it," said Praxedis. "You ought to be thinking already about the reply. Boil the crab till he gets dark red. Then he will not bite you again."

"The answer to this," replied Ekkehard, "has been given already by another: 'Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.'"

"You are extremely mild and pious," said Praxedis, "but take care how you get on in the world with that sentiment. Whoever does not defend his skin will be flayed, and even a miserable enemy should not be considered quite harmless. Seven wasps together will kill a horse, you know."

The Greek maid was right. Silent contempt of an unworthy antagonist is easily interpreted as weakness. But Ekkehard acted according to his nature.

Praxedis approaching him still closer, so that he started back, now added: "Shall I give you another piece of advice, most reverend master?" He silently nodded in the affirmative.

"Then let me tell you that you have again become far too serious of late. To look at you, one would think that you were going to play at nine-pins with the moon and stars. We are now in the middle of summer, and your habit must be exceedingly warm. Get yourself some linen gar-

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ment, and perhaps it would not harm you either to cool your head a little in yonder spring; but above all be merry and cheerful. The Duchess might otherwise become indifferent toward you."

Ekkehard wanted to take her hand. Sometimes he felt as if Praxedis were his good angel; but at that moment Master Spazzo entered the courtyard on horseback at a slow and lingering pace. His head was bent toward the pommel, and a leaden smile rested on his tired features. He was half asleep.

"Your face has undergone a great change since yesterday," called out Praxedis to him. "Why do the sparks not fly out any more from under Falada's hoofs?"

With a vacant stare he looked down at her. Everything was dancing before his eyes.

"Have you brought home a lot of smart-money, Sir Chamberlain?" asked Praxedis.

"Smart-money? For whom?" stolidly said Master Spazzo.

"For poor Cappan! Why, I verily believe that you have eaten a handful of poppy-seed, as you do not remember for what purpose you rode out."

"Poppy-seed?" said Master Spazzo in the same drowsy tone. "Poppy-seed? No. But wine of Meersburg, red wine of Meersburg, unmeasured quantities of red Meersburg, yes!"

Heavily he dismounted, and then retired into

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the privacy of his apartments. The report about the result of his mission was not given. Praxedis cast an astonished look at the departing chamberlain, as she did not wholly understand the reason of Master Spazzo's peculiar frame of mind.

"Have you never heard that to a grown-up man neither springs, woods, nor singing of birds are half so refreshing as old wine?" said Ekkehard, smilingly. "But even as the Jewish prophet boy said to King Darius, when his generals and officers were quarreling around his throne about which of them was the strongest: 'The wine is the strongest of all, for it conquers the men who drink it, and leads their minds astray.'"

Praxedis had approached the wall, and was looking downward.

"Look, you radiant star of learning," she now said to Ekkehard, "who may that dainty little ecclesiastic be who is coming up here?"

Ekkehard bent over the wall and looked down the steep rocky hillside. Between the hazel bushes bordering the footpath that led up to the castle walked a boy with wavy brown locks, wearing a monk's habit coming down to his ankles, sandals on his naked feet, a leathern knapsack on his back, and carrying in his hand a staff with an iron point. Ekkehard did not recognize him as yet.

After a few minutes he reached the castle gate. There he turned round, and shading his eyes with

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his hand he gazed over the wide beautiful landscape stretching out before him. Then he entered the courtyard and approached Ekkehard with measured steps. It was Burkhard, the cloister pupil, the son of Ekkehard's sister, who had come over from Constance to pay a holiday visit to his youthful uncle.

He made a solemn face, and pronounced his greeting as if he had learned it by heart.

Ekkehard embraced the well-behaved boy, who in all the fifteen years of his life had never done a really foolish thing. Burkhard was the bearer of sundry kind messages from St. Gall, as well as of an epistle of Master Ratpert, who, being busy just then with some translation, asked Ekkehard's advice in what style and measure he ought to translate certain difficult passages in Virgil. "Hail, prosperity and progress in knowledge," was the letter's parting salutation.

Ekkehard at once began to question his nephew about all the brothers, but Praxedis soon interrupted him.

"Please to let the godly youngster rest first. A parched tongue is not ready for speech. Come with me, my little man, thou shalt be a more welcome visitor than the wicked Rudimann from the Reichenau!"

"Father Rudimann?" exclaimed the boy. "Him I know also."

Ekkehard

"How did you get to know him?" asked Ekkehard.

"He paid us a visit but a few days since, and brought a big letter to the Abbot, as well as a treatise, which they say contains a great deal about yourself, beloved uncle, and is not much in your praise."

"Hear, hear!" said Praxedis.

"And when he had taken leave, he only went as far as the church, where he prayed till nightfall. Now he must have known every nook and corner in the monastery, for when the sleeping-bell sounded he slunk on tiptoe to the great dormitory, there to listen to what the brothers might say about you and the contents of the treatise. The night-lamp burned but dimly, so that he could crouch down unseen in a dark corner. But at midnight, Father Notker Peppercorn came to go the rounds and to see whether every one had fastened his girdle tidily round his garment, and whether no knife or other dangerous weapon was in the bedroom. *He* drew out the stranger from his hiding-place; and the brothers woke up, and the big lantern was lighted, and then they all rushed on him, armed with sticks and scourges from the scourging-room, and there was a tremendous noise and uproar, although the Abbot and Dean tried to quiet them. Notker Peppercorn was also highly indignant: 'The devil goes about in disguise, trying whom he

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may devour,' cried he, 'but we have caught the devil, and will scourge him!'

"But Father Rudimann, in spite of all, was yet inclined to be saucy: 'I declare, ye excellent youths,' said he, 'if I knew where the carpenter had left some outlet, I should creep away on my hands and feet; but now, when chance has delivered me into your hands, mind that you do not heap insults on the head of your guest!' Then they all got quite furious, and dragged him out into the scourging-room, where he had to go down on his knees to escape scot-free; and when finally the Abbot said, 'We will let the fox go home to his den,' he expressed his thanks in very polite terms.

"On my way, yesterday, I met a cart laden with two big wine-tuns, which the driver told me were a present from the cellarer of the Reichenau for the friendly reception he had met with at St. Gall."

"Of all this Master Rudimann did not breathe a word when he called on us yesterday," said Praxedis. "For that recital thou verily deservest a piece of cake, you darling boy. Thou canst tell a story as well as any older person."

"Oh," said the cloister pupil, half offended, "that's nothing! But I am going to write a poem about it, entitled, 'The wolf's invasion of the sheep fold, and subsequent punishment.' I have already got it half ready in my head. That will be fine!"

Ekkehard

"Dost thou also make poems, my young nephew?" gaily said Ekkehard.

"He would be a nice cloister pupil, indeed, who at fourteen years of age could write no poem!" was the boy's reply. "My hymn in praise of the Archangel Michael, with double rimed hexameters, I was permitted to read out to the Abbot, who was pleased to call my verses 'a glittering string of pearls.' And then my Sapphic ode, in honor of the pious Wiborad, is likewise very pretty. Shall I recite it to you?"

"For God's sake!" cried Praxedis. "Dost thou think that one merely drops down into our courtyard to begin at once reciting odes? Thou hadst better eat thy cake first."

She ran off to the kitchen, leaving Ekkehard's learned nephew under the linden tree to talk with his uncle. He profited by the opportunity to speak a good deal about the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and as the Hohentwiel just then threw a delicately drawn shadow on the plain below, the cloister pupil indulged in a prolix discussion about the cause of all shadows, which he pronounced with great assurance to spring from a compact body standing in the way of light, afterward proving the vanity of all other definitions.

Like the waters from a fountain, did the flood of learning stream forth from the youthful lips. In astronomy also he was quite at home, and his

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uncle had to listen patiently to the praise of Zoroaster and King Ptolemy of Egypt. Further, he had to undergo a strict examination himself about the shape and application of the astrolabe, and finally the curly-headed nephew began to demonstrate how absurd was the opinion of those who believed that on the other side of the globe lived the honorable race of the antipodes!

All these fine things he had learned only five days ago. But at last his uncle did what the brave Emperor Otto did when the famous Bishop of Rheims, and Ottrich, the cathedral schoolmaster of Magdeburg, and hundreds of learned abbots and scholars held their great contest about the basis and classification of theoretical philosophy before him—namely, he yawned. At that critical moment Praxedis reappeared with a delicious cherry tart and a basket filled with various fruits, and these good things speedily gave a more natural turn to the thoughts of the fifteen-year-old philosopher. Like a well-educated boy, he first said grace before eating, as was customary in the monastery, and then he turned his attentions to the annihilation of the cherry tart, leaving the question of the antipodes to some future occasion.

Praxedis now turned to Ekkehard. "The Duchess bids me tell you," she said with mock earnestness, "that she feels inclined to return to the study of Virgil. She is anxious to learn the final fate of

Ekkehard

Queen Dido; and so we are to begin again this very evening. Remember that you are to wear a more cheerful expression than the present one," added she in a lower key, "as it is a delicate attention, in order to show you that in spite of a certain treatise her confidence in your learning has not been destroyed."

This was a fact; but Ekkehard received the news with a start of terror. To be again together with the two women as he used to be—the mere thought was painful. He had not yet been able to forget a certain Good Friday morning.

He now slapped his nephew on the shoulder, so as to make him start, and said: "Thou hast not come here to spend thy holidays merely with fishing and bird-catching, Burkhard. This afternoon we will read Virgil with the gracious Duchess, and thou shalt be present also."

He thought to place the boy like a shield between the Duchess and his thoughts.

"Very well," replied Burkhard, with cherry-dyed lips. "I prefer Virgil a great deal to hunting and riding, and I shall request the Lady Duchess to teach me some Greek. After that visit when they took you away with them, the cloister pupils often said that she knew more Greek than all the venerable fathers of the monastery put together. They say that she learned it by sorcery. And although I am the first in Greek—"

Ekkehard

"Then you will certainly be Abbot in five years, and in twenty Holy Father at Rome," said Praxedis mockingly. "Meanwhile you would do well to wash your blue lips in yonder spring."

At the fourth hour of the evening, Ekkehard was waiting in the pillared hall below, ready to resume his reading of the *Æneid*. More than six months had gone by during which Virgil had been laid aside. Ekkehard felt oppressed. He opened one of the windows through which the pleasant cool air of evening came streaming in.

The cloister pupil was turning over the leaves of the Latin manuscript.

"When the Duchess speaks to thee, mind to be very polite," said Ekkehard. But he replied with a complacent air: "With such a grand lady, I shall only speak in verse. She shall see that a pupil from the inner school stands before her."

Here, the Duchess entered, followed by Praxedis. She greeted Ekkehard with a slight bend of the head. Without appearing to notice the boy, she sat down in her richly carved armchair. Burkhard had made her a graceful bow from the lower end of the table, where he stood.

Ekkehard opened the book, when the Duchess said indifferently: "Why is that boy here?"

"He is but a humble auditor," said Ekkehard, "who, inspired by the wish to learn the Greek language, ventures to approach such a noble teacher."

Ekkehard

He would be very happy, if from your lips he could learn—”

But before Ekkehard had ended his speech, Burkhard had approached the Duchess. With eyes cast down, and a mixture of shyness and confidence, he said, with clear intonation:

“Esse velim Græcus, cum vix sim, domina, Latinus.”

Dame Hadwig listened with astonishment; for a curly-headed boy who could make a hexameter was then unheard of in the Allemannic lands. Moreover, he had improvised it in her honor. Therefore she was really pleased with the youthful verse-maker.

“Let me look at thee a little closer,” said she, drawing him toward her. She was charmed with him, for he had a lovely boyish face, with a red and white complexion, so soft and transparent that the blue veins could be seen through it.

In luxuriant masses the brown curls fell down over his temples, while a bold, aquiline nose rose over the learned youthful lips, as if it were mocking their utterance. Then Dame Hadwig put her arms round the boy, and kissing him on both lips and cheeks, fondled him like a child almost, and finally pushing a cushioned footstool close to her side, bade him sit down on it.

“To begin with, thou shalt gather something else than Greek wisdom from my lips,” said she

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jestingly, giving him another kiss. "But now be a good boy, and say some more nice verses at once."

She pushed back his curls from his blushing face; but the cloister pupil's metrical powers were not to be disturbed even by the kiss of a duchess. Ekkehard had stepped up to the window, where he looked out toward the Alps, while Burkhard without hesitation recited the following lines:

*"Non possum prorsus dignos componere versus,
Nam nimis expavi duce me libante suavi."*

He had produced two more hexameters.

The Duchess laughed out gaily. "Well, I verily believe that thou didst greet the light of this world with a Latin verse at thy birth! That flows from thy lips as if Virgil had arisen from his grave. But why dost thou blush when I kiss thee?"

"Because you are so grand, and proud, and beautiful," said the boy.

"Never mind," replied the Duchess. "He who with the fresh kiss yet burning on his lips can improvise such perfect verses can not be very much terrified."

Making him stand up before her, she asked him: "And why art thou so very eager to learn Greek?"

"Because they say, that if a man knows Greek, he can become clever enough to hear the grass grow," was the ready answer. "Ever since my fellow-pupil Notker with the large lip has boasted

Ekkehard

he was going to learn the whole of Aristotle by heart, and then translate it into German, I have been uneasy in my mind."

Dame Hadwig again laughed merrily. "Let us begin then. Dost thou know the antiphon, 'Ye seas and rivers praise the Lord?'"

"Yes," said Burkhard.

"Then repeat after me: *θάλασσι καὶ ποταμί, εὐλογεῖτε τὸν κύριον.*"

The boy repeated it.

"Now sing it!" He did so.

Ekkehard looked over reproachfully at them. The Duchess interpreted the look aright.

"So now, thou hast learned six words already," she said to Burkhard, "and as soon as thou askest for it in hexameters, thou shalt be taught some more. For the present, sit down there at my feet, and listen attentively. We will read Virgil now."

Then Ekkehard began the fourth canto of the *Æneid*; and he read of the sorrows of Dido, who is ever beset by thoughts of the noble Trojan guest, whose words and looks are all deeply engraven on her inmost heart. And she speaks out her grief thus to her sister:

"If it were not decreed, in the depth of my soul, that I never
Wedlock again would contract with any man that is
living;

If I, the torches of Hymen and bridal-room not detested,

Ekkehard

Might be so weak, perhaps, to give way to this present temptation.

Anna, to thee confess, that since my beloved Sichæus
Fell with the wound in his heart, at the feet of the blood-
dripping Lares,

He alone has succeeded in touching my heart and disturbing

All the peace of my soul that is changed into strife and contention."

But Dame Hadwig had not much sympathy with the sorrows of the Carthaginian widowed queen. She leaned back in her armchair and looked up at the ceiling. She no longer found any similarity between herself and the desolate woman in the book.

"Stop a moment," cried she. "How clear it is, that this is written by a man. He wants to humiliate women! It is all false! Who on earth would fall so madly in love with an utter stranger?"

"That, Virgil has to answer for," said Ekkehard. "History no doubt bequeathed the facts to him."

"Then the present generation of women is somewhat stronger-minded," said the Duchess, making a sign to him to continue. She was almost offended with Virgil's description. Perhaps because she was reminded of certain Didonian feelings which she had experienced herself one day. Things had not always been as they were now.

Ekkehard

And he read on, how Anna advises her sister not to struggle any longer against her growing passion; and how, though peace and rest might be implored for by sacrifices on the altars of the mighty Gods, the relentless, devouring flame was yet burning on inwardly, and the wound did not heal.

And again the poor deluded queen, desires to hear of the battles round Ilium, and:

“When she was left then alone, and the rays of the queen
of the heavens

Fell on her desolate couch, and the stars were silently
shining,

Seeming to mock at her grief, which, excluding the pain-
stilling slumber,

Kept her awake at night when she thought of him, her
beloved,

Many a time, to delude her heart and stifle its longings,
She would fondle the boy, the image of him, of Æneas.”

. A low giggle here interrupted the reading. The cloister pupil, sitting at the Duchess's feet, so as almost to touch her wavy robes, had listened attentively until now, when he struggled in vain to stifle a rising laugh, which at last broke out, though he had covered up his face with his hands to keep it back.

“What is the matter now, young verse-maker?” asked the Duchess.

Ekkehard

"I could not help thinking," said the boy with some embarrassment, "that if my gracious mistress were Queen Dido, I should have been acting the part of Ascanius when you deigned to kiss me."

The Duchess looked down sharply at the boy. "Art thou inclined to be naughty? Well, 'tis no wonder," added she, pointing at his curls, "for the precocious youth has already got gray hairs on his head."

"That is from the night when they slew Romeias," the cloister pupil wanted to say, but could not, as the Duchess sharply continued: "That comes from thy forwardness, which makes thee say foolish things when thou hadst better be silent. Get up, little man!"

Burkhard rose from the stool, and stood blushing before her.

"So," said she, "now go to Praxedis and tell her that as a punishment all thy gray hairs are to be cut off, and beg her to do it for you. That will be a good cure for untimely laughter."

The boy's eyes filled with big tears, but he dared not disobey. So he went up to Praxedis, who had some sympathy for him, since she had heard that he had been Romeias's companion during his last hours.

"I shall not hurt thee, my little saint," she whispered, drawing him toward her. He knelt down before her, bending his young head over her lap,

Ekkehard

while she took a big pair of scissors out of her straw-braided work-basket, and executed the punishment.

At first the cloister pupil's sobs sounded dolefully, for he who allowed a strange hand to touch his locks was considered to be deeply dishonored, but Praxedis's soft little hand caressingly patted his cheeks, after having ruffled his curls, so that, in spite of all punishment, he felt almost happy and his mouth smilingly caught up the last falling tear.

Ekkehard looked down silently for a while. Frivolous, though graceful, jesting makes a sad heart but sadder. He was hurt that the Duchess had thus interrupted his reading. Looking up into her eyes, he found no comfort there. "She trifles with thee, as well as she trifles with the boy," thought he, closing the book and rising from his seat.

"You are right," said he to Dame Hadwig, "'tis all wrong. Dido ought to laugh, and Æneas to go and kill himself with his sword. Then it would be quite natural."

She gazed at him with an unsteady look. "What is the matter with you?" asked she.

"I can not read any more," replied he.

The Duchess had risen also.

"If you do not care to read any longer," she said with an apparently indifferent expression,

Ekkehard

"there are still other ways and means to pass one's time. What say you if I were to ask you to tell us some graceful tales? You might choose whatever you liked. There are still many grand and beautiful things, besides your Virgil. Or you might invent something yourself. I see that you are oppressed by some care. You neither like to read, nor to go out into the country. Everything hurts your eyes, as you say. I think that your mind lacks some great task which we will now give you."

"What could I invent?" replied Ekkehard. "Is it not enough happiness to be the echo of a master like Virgil?" He looked with a veiled eye at the Duchess. "I should only be able to chant elegies, very sad ones, too."

"Nothing else?" said Dame Hadwig reproachfully. "Have our ancestors not gone out to war, and let their bugles sound the alarm through the world, and have they not fought battles as grand as those of Æneas? Do you believe that the great Emperor Charles would have had all the old national songs collected and sung, if they had been nothing but chaff? Must you, then, take everything out of your Latin books?"

"I know nothing," repeated Ekkehard.

"But you *must* know something," persisted the Duchess. "If we, who live here in this castle, were to sit together of an evening and talk of old tales and legends, I shouldn't wonder if we should

Ekkehard

produce more than the whole of the Æneid contains! 'Tis true that the pious son of the Emperor Charles did not care any more for the old heroic songs, and preferred listening to whining psalms, until he died, diseased in body and mind; but we still cling to those old tales. Do tell us such a story, Master Ekkehard, and we will gladly spare you your Virgil with his love-sick queen."

But Ekkehard's thoughts were quite differently occupied. He shook his head like one who is dreaming.

"I see that you want some stimulant," said the Duchess. "Above all, a good example will inspire you. Praxedis, prepare thyself, and likewise tell our chamberlain, that we are going to entertain ourselves to-morrow, with the telling of old legends. Let everybody be well prepared."

She took up Virgil and threw it under the table, as a sign that a new era was to begin forthwith.

Her idea was certainly good and well conceived. Only the cloister pupil, who had rested his head on Praxedis's lap, while the Duchess spoke, had not quite taken in her meaning.

"When may I learn some more Greek, gracious mistress?" he asked. "*ῥάλασσι καὶ πόταμι—*"

"When the gray hairs are grown again," said she gaily, giving him another kiss.

Ekkehard left the hall with hasty steps.

Ekkehard

CHAPTER XX

OLD GERMAN LEGENDS

ON the top of the Hohentwiel and within the castle precincts, a very pretty, though small, garden had been laid out on a steep, projecting rock encircled by a wall. It was a lovely place, well fitted for a lookout. The hill was so steep there, that by leaning over the parapet one could throw a stone down into the valley below, and he who delighted in an extensive view could there enjoy it to his heart's content, the eye taking in mountain and plain, lake and distant Alps, with no obstacle barring the view.

In a corner of this little garden, an old maple tree spread out its branches undisturbed. Its winged seeds were already ripe and brown, fluttering down on the black garden earth below. A ladder had been placed against its grayish green trunk, at the foot of which Praxedis was standing, holding the corner of a long and heavy piece of tent cloth; while Burkhard, the cloister pupil, was sitting high up in the branches, trying to fasten the other ends with the help of a hammer and some nails.

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"Attention!" called out Praxedis. "I verily believe that thou art watching yonder stork, flying over to Radolfszell. Take care, thou paragon of all Latin scholars, and do not drive the nail into the air!"

Praxedis had lifted the cloth with her left hand, and when the cloister pupil now let go the other end, it fell down heavily, tearing out the badly fixed nails, and entirely burying the Greek maid under its massy folds.

"There now, thou awkward boy!" scolded Praxedis, as soon as she had disentangled herself from the coarse wrapper. "I suppose I must look out whether there are not some more gray hairs to be cut off!"

Scarcely had she pronounced the last word, when the cloister pupil became visible on the ladder, and, jumping down from the middle, he now stood on the cloth before Praxedis.

"Sit down," said he; "I do not mind in the least being punished again. I dreamt this very night, that you cut off all my curls, and that I had returned to school with an entirely bald head—and yet I was not sorry for it."

Praxedis lightly boxed his ears. "Don't grow too impudent during the holidays, my little man, or thy back will prove a nice floor for the rod to dance upon when thou gettest back to thy cloister school."

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But the cloister pupil was not thinking of the cool lecture room of his monastery. He remained standing motionless before Praxedis.

"Well?" said she, "what is the matter? What dost thou want?"

"A kiss," replied the pupil of the liberal arts.

"Heigho! nothing else?" laughed Praxedis. "What reason has thy wisdom for such a demand?"

"The Lady Duchess has kissed me also," said Burkhard, "and you have often asked me to tell you all about that day when I fled with my brave old friend Romeias before the Huns, and how he fought like the hero that he was. All this I shall not tell you unless you give me a kiss."

"Listen," said the Greek maid with a mock serious face, "I have something very wonderful to tell you."

"What?" asked the boy eagerly.

"That thou art the naughtiest little rogue who has ever set foot on the threshold of a cloister school," continued she, and suddenly throwing her white arms around him, she gave him a hearty kiss on the nose.

"Well done, I declare!" called out a deep bass voice from the garden door, at the very moment when she playfully pushed the boy away from her. It was Master Spazzo.

"Ah, is it you?" said Praxedis, perfectly unabashed. "You are just in time, Sir Chamberlain,

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to assist us in fixing this canvas. I shall never get it done, with that silly boy!"

"So it appears," said Master Spazzo, with a cutting look at the cloister pupil, who, standing rather in awe of the chamberlain's fierce-looking mustache, slipped away between some rose bushes. Astronomy and the metrics, Aristotle in the original language, and red girlish lips, formed a strange medley in the youthful mind.

"Are there no fitter objects for kisses in this castle, gentle maiden?" asked Master Spazzo.

"If one should ever feel so inclined," was Praxedis's answer, "the fitter objects ride away and stray about in night and darkness; and when they return at daytime, they look as if they had been chasing the will-o'-the-wisps all night."

Herewith Master Spazzo was answered. He had made a vow not to betray a single word of his nightly adventures, cuckoo and *vince luna* included.

"In what way can I help you?" said he humbly.

"In making a bower," said Praxedis. "In the cool hours of the evening the Duchess will hold court here, and then stories are to be told—old stories, Sir Chamberlain, the more wonderful the better! Our mistress has grown tired of Latin, and wishes for something else. Something original that has not yet been written down; you are also expected to contribute your mite!"

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"The Lord protect my soul!" exclaimed Master Spazzo. "If under the reign of a woman everything was not wondrously strange, I really should begin to wonder at this. Are there no wandering minstrels and lute-players left, who for a helmetful of wine and a leg of deer will sing themselves hoarse with such tales? We are rising in estimation! 'Vagabonds, jugglers, bards, and the like strolling idlers are to be flogged, and if they complain they are to be presented with a man's shadow on a wall, as indemnification,' as the law says. I thank you for that honor!"

"You will do what you are commanded, like a faithful vassal, who moreover has still to render a report about a certain business transacted over the monastic wine-jug," said Praxedis. "It will be merrier, at any rate, than spelling out Latin! Have you no desire to rival the learned Master Ekkehard?"

This hint made some impression on the chamberlain's mind. "Give me the corners of the cloth," said he, "so that I may fix them." He then mounted the ladder, and fastened the ends to the branches. Opposite were some tall poles entwined with the blue-blossomed bean-plant. To these Praxedis tied the other two corners, and very soon the grayish-white canvas formed a nice roof, contrasting pleasantly with the green foliage.

"It would be a very cozy place for drinking

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one's vesper wine," said Master Spazzo half sadly at the idea of that which was to come.

Praxedis meanwhile arranged the table and seats. The Duchess's stuffed armchair, with the finely carved back, touched the stem of the maple tree, while some low stools were placed round for the others. Fetching down her lute, Praxedis put it on the table beside a huge nosegay which she had ordered Burkhard to make. Finally, she tied a strong thread of red silk, first to the trunk, then round the bean plantation, and from there to the wall, so as to leave free only a narrow entrance.

"There," said she gaily, "now our fairy hall is hedged in like King Laurin's rose-garden. The walls were not very difficult to make."

The Duchess, taking much pleasure in her idea, adorned herself with particular care on that day. It was still somewhat early to be called evening when she went down to the bower. She was really a dazzling apparition, as she proudly sailed along in her flowing robes. The sleeves and seams were richly embroidered with gold, and a steel-gray tunic, held by jeweled clasps, fell down to the ground like a mantle. On her head she wore a soft transparent tissue, a sort of veil, fastened to a golden head-band. Pulling out a rose from Burkhard's nosegay, she stuck it in between the head-band and the veil.

The cloister pupil, who was fast forgetting his

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classics and liberal arts, had begged leave to carry the Duchess's train, and it was in her honor that he had donned a pair of very queer-looking, pointed shoes, adorned on both sides with flaps. He certainly felt a good deal elated at the happiness of being allowed to act as page to such a mistress.

Praxedis and Master Spazzo came in after her. The Duchess, casting her eyes hastily about, now said: "Has Master Ekkehard, for whose especial benefit we have appointed this evening, become invisible?"

"My uncle must be ill," said Burkhard. "He paced up and down in his room with hasty steps yesterday evening, and when I wanted to show him the different constellations, such as the Bear and Orion, and the faintly glittering Pleiads, he gave me no answer whatever. At last he threw himself on his couch with all his clothes on and talked a good deal in his sleep.

"What did he say?" asked the Duchess.

"He said, 'Oh, my dove that art in the clefts of the rocks, and in the secret places of the stones, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice. For sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is lovely.' And another time he said, 'Why do you kiss the boy before my eyes? What do I hope still, and why do I yet tarry in the Libyan lands?'"

"That is a nice state of things, I declare," whis-

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pered Master Spazzo into the Greek maid's ear. "Does that rest on *your* conscience?"

The Duchess, however, said to Burkhard: "I suppose that thou hast been dreaming thyself. Run up to thy uncle, and make him come down, as we are waiting for him."

She sat down gracefully on her throne-like seat. The cloister pupil soon came back with Ekkehard, who was looking very pale, while his eyes had something wild and sad about them. He silently bowed his head, and then sat down at the opposite end of the table. Burkhard wanted to place his stool again at the Duchess's feet, as he had done the day before, when they had read Virgil; but Ekkehard rose, and pulled him over by the hand. "Come hither!" said he. The Duchess let him do as he wished.

Casting first a look around her, she began thus: "We pretended yesterday that in our German legends and tales there was as much and as good matter for entertainment as in the Roman epic of Æneas; and I doubt not that each person among us knows something of heroic battles and besieged fortresses; of the separation of faithful lovers and the dissensions of mighty kings. The human heart is differently disposed, so that what does not interest the one may please the other. Therefore we have made the arrangement that each of our faithful subjects, as the drawing of lots will decide,

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shall relate some graceful tale; and it will be our task then to adjudge a prize for the best story. If one of you men should be the victor, he shall have the ancient drinking-horn which, from the time of King Dagobert, has been hanging in the great hall; and if my faithful Praxedis should win, some pretty trinket is to be her reward. The pulling of straws shall decide who is to begin."

Praxedis had prepared four bits of straw of different lengths, which she handed to the Duchess.

"Shall I add another for the young verse-maker?" asked she.

But Burkhard said in a doleful voice: "I beseech you to spare me; for if my teacher at St. Gall were to hear that I had again diverted myself with idle tales I should certainly be punished as I was when we acted the story of the old Hildebrand and his son Hadubrand in Romeias's room. The gatekeeper always delighted in it, and it was he who made our wooden horses and shields with his own hands. I was the son Hadubrand, and my fellow-pupil Notker acted old Hildebrand, his nether lip being as big as an old man's. Ho, didn't we fly at each other, so that a cloud of dust flew out of Romeias's windows! Notker had already unfastened his arm-ring, holding it out to me, as the old song describes it, and I was just saying: 'Hoho, thou old blade! Thou art really

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too cunning by half. Dost thou think to beguile me with thy words, and then to throw thy spear at me? Has thy head become hoary with treachery and lies? Seafaring men in the west, on the Wendel lake, told me he was killed in the wars, was Hildebrand, the son of Heribrand!" Then Master Ratolt, our teacher of rhetoric, came upstairs on tiptoe, and belabored us so fiercely with his large rod that sword and shield fell from our hands.

"Romeias was called a stupid old blockhead for decoying us from useful studies, and my friend Notker and myself were locked up for three days, fed on bread and water, and had to make a hundred and fifty Latin hexameters in honor of St. Othmar, as a punishment."

The Duchess smiled. "God forbid that we should tempt thee again to such a sin," said she.

She put the four straws into her right hand, and smilingly held them out for them to draw. Ekkehard's eyes were fixed immovably on the rose under her head-band, as he stepped up to her. She had to speak to him twice before he pulled out a straw.

"Death and damnation!" Master Spazzo almost ejaculated, for he had got hold of the shortest straw. But he well knew that no excuse would be available, and dolefully looked down into the valley, as if he expected help to come from thence.

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Praxedis had tuned her lute and was playing a prelude that blended sweetly with the rustling of the branches in the old maple tree.

"Our chamberlain has no punishment to fear if he will relate us some pretty story," said the Duchess. "Please to begin."

Then Master Spazzo bent his head forward, put his sword with its broad hilt before him, so that he could lean on it, gave a preliminary stroke to his beard, and thus began:

"Although I never took much delight in old stories, preferring to hear the clashing of two good swords, or the tapping of a tun of good wine, I yet once chanced to come across a fine legend. In my younger days I had to make a journey to Italy, and my road then took me through the Tyrol and over the Brenner mountain; and it was a rough and stony path, leading me over many a rock, and through many a wild glen, so that my horse lost one of its shoes. When the evening set in I had reached a little village, called Gothensass, or Gloggensachsen, which from the times of Sir Dietrich of Bern has lain there, hidden among the larch woods. At the outskirts of this village, and built against the mountain, there was a house, much resembling a stronghold, before which there lay heaps of iron slag, while inside there was a big fire, and some one who was lustily pounding the anvil.

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"So I called to the blacksmith to come forth and shoe my horse, and when nobody came, I gave a knock at the door with the butt-end of my lance, so that it flew open as wide as it could, while I gave vent to some tremendous curse of death and murder and all possible evils. Suddenly a man stood before me, with shaggy hair and a leathern apron, and scarcely had I set eyes on him, when my lance was already beaten down, so that it broke to pieces as if it had been mere glass, while an iron bar was swung threateningly over my head. On the man's naked arms there were to be seen sinews which looked as if he could strike an anvil ten fathoms deep into the ground. Then I bethought myself that under such circumstances a polite speech might not come amiss, and therefore I said: 'I merely wanted to beseech you to shoe my horse.' Then the blacksmith drove the iron bar into the ground and said: 'That sounds somewhat different and will help you. Rudeness, however, will attain nothing at Wieland's forge. That's what you may tell the people where you come from.'

"After this speech he shod my horse, and I saw that he was a skilful and honorable blacksmith, and so we became very good friends, and I let my horse be put into his stables, and remained his guest for the night. And we caroused together till late and the wine was called Terlaner, and he poured it out of a leathern bottle.

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"While we were thus drinking, I questioned my sooty host about the name of his forge, and how it had got that name; upon which he struck up a loud laugh, and then told me the story of 'Smith Wieland.' And if it was not exactly what you might call very refined, it was for all that a very pretty tale."

Master Spazzo stopped a while, throwing a look at the table, like one who looks about for a draft of wine to moisten his dry lips with. But wine there was none, and the look was not understood. So he continued:

"Whence Smith Wieland had come, said the man of Gothensass to me, had never been actually ascertained. It was said that in the northern seas, in the land of Schonen, the giant Wade was his father, and that his grandmother was a mermaid, who, when he was born, came up from the depth of the sea, and sat a whole night on a rock and harped, 'Young Wieland must become a blacksmith.' So, in the course of time, Wade brought the boy to Mime, the famous armorer, who lived in a dark fir wood, twenty miles beyond Toledo, and who instructed him thoroughly in his craft.

"As soon, however, as he had made his first sword, Mime advised him to go away, and to acquire the last finishing touch in his craft among the dwarfs. So Wieland went to the dwarfs and became very renowned.

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“One day, however, the giants invaded dwarf-land, so that Wieland had to fly, and he could take nothing away with him except his broadsword Mimung. This he buckled across his back, and chance then brought him to the Tyrol. Between the Eisach, Etsch, and Inn there reigned in those days King Alberich, who received Wieland kindly, gave him the forge in the wood on the Brenner mountain; and all the iron and ore which was hidden in the mountain’s veins was put at his disposal. And Wieland’s heart became light and happy in the Tyrolese Alps. The mountain torrents rushed past him, setting his wheels a-going; the winds fanned his fire into brighter flames, and the stars said to each other, ‘We must do our best, or the sparks which Wieland produces will outshine us.’ Thus Wieland’s work prospered. Shield and swords, knives and drinking-cups, as well as all the ornaments which adorn a king’s palace, were made by his dexterous hands, and there was no smith, as far as the sun shone on Alpine snow, who could compare with him. King Alberich, however, had many bitter enemies, who one day formed an alliance with the one-eyed Æmilius for their leader, and invaded the land. And Alberich’s heart was filled with dismay, and he said: ‘He who will bring me Æmilius’s head shall marry my only daughter.’ Then Wieland extinguished the fire in his forge, buckled on his broad-

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sword Mimung, and went out to fight King Albreich's enemies. And his good sword cut off Æmilius's head, so that the whole body of enemies turned round and fled homeward as fast as ever they could. Wieland, however, presented the head to the King. But he said angrily: 'What I have said about my daughter the winds have scattered; a smith can never become my son-in-law, for he would blacken my hands when I extended them for a friendly greeting. But thou shalt have three golden coins as a reward. With these a man can tilt and joust, dance and make merry, and buy himself a wench in the market.' Wieland, however, threw the three golden coins at his feet, so that they rolled under the throne and said: 'May God bless you; you will never see me more!' and with this he turned round to leave the land. But the king, not wanting to lose the smith, had him thrown to the ground, and his tendons cut, so that he became lame, and had to give up all thoughts of flight.

"Then Wieland dragged himself sadly home to his forge, and relighted his fire; but he whistled and sang no more when he wielded the heavy hammer, and his mind was embittered. One day the king's son, a red-cheeked boy, who had run out alone into the wood, came in and said: 'Wieland, I want to see thee at thy work.' Then the smith artfully replied: 'Place thyself close to the anvil;

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there thou wilt see everything best.' And he took the red-hot iron bar out of the flames, and stabbed the king's son right into the heart with it. The bones he afterward bleached, and covered with ore and silver, so that they became pillars for candlesticks, and the skull he encircled with gold, making it into a drinking-cup. All this Wieland sent to Alberich, and when the messengers came to inquire for the boy, he said: 'I have not seen him; he must have run out into the woods.'

"Some time afterward the king's daughter was walking in her garden. She was so beautiful that the lilies bowed their heads before her. On her forefinger she wore a ring of gold, shaped like a serpent, in the head of which there glistened a carbuncle, which Alberich had set there himself; and he held this ring far dearer than a kingdom, and had given it to his daughter only because he loved her above everything. As she was culling a rose, the ring fell from the maiden's finger, and rolling over the stones it got broken, and the carbuncle fell out of its golden setting, so that the maid lamented bitterly, wringing her hands, and would not go home for fear of her father's anger.

"Then one of her waiting-women said to her: 'You must go secretly to Wieland, and he will mend it for you.' So the king's daughter entered Wieland's forge, and told him her grief. He took the ring out of her hand, and set about repairing

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it, so that the carbuncle soon shone out again from the serpent's head. But all this while Wieland's brow had been wearing a dark frown, and when the maiden kindly smiled at him, and turned to go, he said: 'Oho, you shall not go away yet!' And he locked the strong door, and seizing the king's daughter with strong arms he carried her into his chamber, where moss and fern leaves lay heaped up. And when she went away she wept aloud, and tore her soft, silken hair—"

Here Master Spazzo was interrupted by a slight noise. Praxedis, with a deep blush overspreading her features, had cast an inquiring look at the Duchess, to see whether she should not jump up to close Master Spazzo's mouth, but as nothing of the kind was to be read in her calm, set features, she impatiently drummed with her fingers on the back of her lute.

"—For a deed of violence had been done," Master Spazzo continued, quite unabashed. "Then Wieland began singing and shouting in such a manner as had never been heard in the forge before ever since his tendons had been cut. Leaving his shields and swords unfinished, he now worked day and night, and forged for himself a pair of large metal wings, and he had hardly finished them, when King Alberich came down the Brenner mountain with a strong body of armed men. Then Wieland quickly fastened the wings to his

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shoulders, and hung his sword Mimung over his back, and thus equipped he mounted the roof of his house, so that the men exclaimed: 'Behold, Wieland has become a bird!' With a powerful voice he then called out: 'May God bless you, King Alberich! You will not forget the smith so easily, I trow! Your son I have slain, and your daughter is with child by me. Farewell, and give her my greetings!' After this, he spread out his huge wings, making a noise like a hurricane, and flew through the air. The King seized his bow, and all the knights hastily followed his example. Like an army of flying dragons, the arrows whizzed round his head; but not one of them hit him, and he flew home to his father's castle in Schonen, and never was seen again. And Alberich never gave Wieland's message to his daughter, who in that same year gave birth to a son, who was called Wittich, and became a strong hero like his father.

"That is the story of the smith Wieland!"

Master Spazzo leaned back, heaving a deep sigh of relief. "They will not trouble me a second time for a story, I warrant," thought he. The impression which the story had made on the hearers was varied. The Duchess expressed herself well satisfied with it. She had some sympathy with the smith's revenge, while Praxedis angrily said that it was truly a sooty smith's story, and that the cham-

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berlain ought to be ashamed to show himself before women! Ekkehard said: "I don't know, but it seems to me as if I had once heard something like it, but then the king's name was Nidung, and the forge was at the foot of the Caucasus."

Then the chamberlain called out angrily: "If you prefer the Caucasus to Gloggensachsen, very well, then you may lay the scene there, but I well recollect how my Tyrolese friend showed me the very spot itself. Over the chamber door there was a broken rose of metal and an iron eagle's wing, and below it the words, 'Here the smith flew away,' were engraved. Now and then people come there to pray, as they believe Wieland to have been a great saint."

"Let us see who will be the first to try to out-rival Master Spazzo," said the Duchess, once more mixing the straws. They drew accordingly, and the shortest, this time, remained with Praxedis. She neither appeared embarrassed, nor did she appeal to the indulgence of her listeners. Passing her little white hand over her dark tresses she began thus:

"It is true my nurses never sang me any lullabies of valiant knights, and, thank God, I have never been in a lonely forge in a wood; but even in Constantinopolis you may hear such tales recited. At the time when I was instructed at the Emperor's court in all the arts well becoming a serving-maid,

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there was also an old woman who kept the keys, Glycerium by name, who often said to us: 'Listen, ye maidens all, if you should ever serve a princess whose heart is consumed by a secret passion, and who can not see him whom she loves, then you must be sly and thoughtful like the waiting-woman Herlindis, when King Rother wooed the daughter of the Emperor Constantine.' And when we were sitting together of an evening in the women's apartment, then they whispered and chattered, until old Glycerium related the story of *King Rother*.

"In olden times there was an Emperor called Constantine, living in his castle on the Bosphorus, who had a wondrously beautiful daughter; and people said of her that she was radiant like the evening-star and outshone all other maids like a golden thread among silken ones. One fine day there arrived a great ship, out of which landed twelve counts and twelve knights, and they all rode into Constantine's palace yard, one whose name was Lupolt riding at their head. And all the people of the city marveled at them, for their garments and mantles were heavy with gold and precious stones, and the horses' saddles rang with little golden bells. These were the messengers of King Rother of Vikingland, and Lupolt jumped down from his saddle, and spoke thus to the Emperor Constantine:

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“We are sent out by our king, called Rother, who is the handsomest man ever born of woman. In his service are the bravest of heroes, and his court is the constant scene of balls and tournaments and all that heart can desire. But as yet he is unmarried, and his heart feels lonely.

“You should give him your daughter!”

“Now Constantine was a hot-tempered man, and throwing the imperial globe fiercely to the ground, he cried: ‘Nobody has as yet wooed my daughter who has not lost his head in the endeavor. How do you dare to insult me in that way? You are all my prisoners.’

“And he had them thrown into a dungeon, into which neither sun nor moon could shine; and they had nothing but bread and water to live on; and there they shed many bitter tears of sorrow.

“When the tidings reached King Rother, his heart was filled with sadness, and he sat on a rock all alone, and would speak to nobody. Then he formed the resolution of crossing the seas, like a true knight, to succor his faithful messengers; and as he had been warned against the Greeks, and had been told that if a man wanted to attain anything there he must needs paint and gild the truth, he made his knights take an oath that they would all pretend that his name was not Rother, but Dietrich, and that he had been banished by King Rother, and had come to crave the Greek Emperor’s assist-

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ance. Thus they set out in a ship, and Rother took his harp on board with him, for before his twelve ambassadors had weighed anchor he came to the shore with his harp and played three airs, which they were to remember, saying: 'If ever you should be in distress, and hear these airs, you will know that Rother is near and will help you.'

"It was Easter day, and the Emperor Constantine had gone to the hippodrome when Rother made his entrance. And all the citizens of Constantinopolis ran out of their houses, for such a sight they had never seen before. Rother had brought his giants along with him. The first was called Asprian, and carried an iron bar which measured six yards in length; the second was called Widolt, and was so fierce that they had loaded him with chains; and the third was called Eveningred.

"Besides these, a large number of valiant knights followed him, and twelve carriages loaded with jewels came in the rear, and the whole was such a splendid spectacle that the Empress said: 'Alas, how stupid we have been, in refusing our daughter to King Rother! What a man he must be to send such an army of heroes over the seas!'

"King Rother himself wore a gold breastplate and a purple coat, and two rows of beautiful rings on his wrists. And he bent his knee before the Greek Emperor and said: 'I, the Prince Dietrich, have been outlawed by a king whose name is

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Rother, so that all I have ever done in his service now tells against me. I have come to offer my services to you.'

"Then Constantine invited all the heroes to the hippodrome, and treating them with all honor he afterward made them sit at his own table. Now in the hall there was a tame lion, which used to take away the serving-men's food. It also came to Asprian's plate, to lick it up, upon which the giant seized it by the mane, and threw it against the wall, so that it was killed on the spot. Then the chamberlains said to each other: 'He who has no desire to be thrown against the wall had best leave that man's plate alone.'

"King Rother then began to distribute a great many handsome presents among the Greeks. Every one who visited him in his temporary abode received either a mantle or some piece of arms. Among others there also came an outlawed count, to whom he gave a thousand silver crowns, and took him into his service, so that his train was increased by many hundred knights.

"Thus the so-called Dietrich's praise was in the mouth of everybody, and among the women there began a whispering and talking, so that there was not a chamber whose walls did not ring with Sir Dietrich's name.

"Then the golden-haired daughter of the Emperor said to Herlindis, her waiting-woman: 'Alas,

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what shall I do that I also may obtain a look at the man whom they all admire so?' And Herlindis replied: 'The best thing would be if you asked your father to give a great banquet, and to invite the stranger guests; then you could easily see him.'

"The Emperor's daughter followed this advice, and Constantine did not say her nay, and he invited all his dukes and counts as well as the foreign heroes. All who were invited came; and around him whom they called Dietrich there was a great crowd, and just when the princess with her hundred court ladies came in, with the golden crown on her head, and her gold-embroidered purple mantle, there was a great noise, which was occasioned by a chamberlain's having ordered Asprian, the giant, to move on his bench, to make room for other people. For a reply, Asprian gave the chamberlain a box on the ear which split his head, and there ensued a general riot, so that Dietrich had to restore order himself.

"For this reason the Emperor's daughter could not obtain the desired glimpse of the hero, though she wanted it ever so much.

"When she had returned home, she said to Herlindis: 'Woe is me! I shall neither have rest now by night nor by day until my eyes have beheld that valiant man. He who would bring me the hero to my chamber might win a handsome reward.' And Herlindis replied laughingly: 'That

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message I will faithfully undertake. I will go to the house where he lives.'

"Then the sly maiden put on her most becoming garments, and went out to Sir Dietrich, who received her with due courtesy. And she sat down beside him, and whispered into his ear: 'My mistress, the Emperor's daughter, sends you many gracious greetings. She has taken a great fancy to you, and wishes you to pay her a visit.'

"But Dietrich replied: 'Woman, thou art not doing right. I have entered many a bower in days gone by; why dost thou mock the homeless wanderer? At the Emperor's court there are noble dukes and princes enough, and thy mistress never dreamt of what thou art now saying!'

"And when Herlindis insisted on the truth of her words, Sir Dietrich said: 'There are so many spies about here that he who wishes to keep his reputation unstained must be very careful. Constantine would banish me if he found out that I had been to see his daughter. Please to tell her this, though I should much like to serve her.'

"Herlindis was rising to go, when the King ordered his goldsmiths to make a pair of golden shoes, and another pair of silver, and he gave her one of each pair, as well as a mantle and twelve bracelets; for he was a gallant man and knew that a princess's waiting-woman entrusted with such delicate matters ought to be much honored."

Ekkehard

Praxedis here stopped a moment, for Master Spazzo, who had begun drawing a number of big-nosed faces on the sand with the scabbard of his sword, now hummed audibly, but as he did not say anything, she continued:

“And Herlindis returned home full of glee, and spoke thus to her mistress: ‘The valiant knight holds his honor dear. He values the Emperor’s good-will too much to comply with your wishes. But look here at what he gave me—these shoes, bracelets, and the mantle! How glad I am that I went there; for surely I shall never behold a handsomer knight in this wide world. God pardon me, but I stared at him as if he were an angel!’

“‘Alas!’ said the princess, ‘am I never to be made happy? Then at least thou must give me the shoes which the noble hero gave to thee. I will give thee their weight in gold.’

“Thus, the bargain was concluded. First she put on the golden shoe, but when she took up the silver one, she perceived that it was made for the same foot. ‘Woe is me!’ cried the beautiful maiden. ‘Thou hast made a mistake, and I shall never get it on. Thou must go once more to Sir Dietrich, and beg him to give thee the other shoe, and also that he should come himself.’

“‘That will delight all scandal-loving tongues,’ laughed Herlindis, ‘but what does it matter? I will go!’ And she drew up her skirts almost to

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her knees, and walked over the wet courtyard to Sir Dietrich, and the noble hero saw her coming, and he well knew what she wanted. Still, he feigned not to see her.

"But Herlindis accosted him thus: 'You see that I had to come again. A mistake has been made; so my mistress bids me ask you to give me the other shoe, and to accompany me yourself.'

" 'Verily, I should much like to go,' said he, 'but the Emperor's chamberlains would betray me.'

" 'Never fear that,' said Herlindis, 'for they are all out, practising at throwing the spear. Take two servants with you, and follow me softly, and nobody will miss you during the tournament.'

"After this, the faithful maiden wanted to go, but the hero detained her, saying: 'I will first inquire after the shoes.' Then Asprian, who was outside, called out: 'What matters an old shoe? We have made many thousands of them, and the servants are now wearing them. I will look for the right one.' So he brought it, and Dietrich again gave a mantle and twelve bracelets to the waiting-woman.

"So she went on before, and imparted the desired news to her mistress.

"Sir Dietrich had meanwhile incited a great uproar outside the hippodrome. Widolt came out first with his iron bar, raving like a madman. Asprian cut a somersault in the air, and Even-

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ingred threw an immense stone of several hundredweight a long distance, and then sprang after it, so that none of the spies thought of watching Sir Dietrich, as he walked steadily across the yard.

“At the window stood the princess, looking out, and her heart beat fast when she saw him approach. Her chamber door was then opened to him and she addressed him thus: ‘Welcome, my noble lord! Great pleasure does it give me to see you. Now you can put the beautiful shoes on my feet yourself.’

“‘Gladly will I do so,’ said the hero, sitting down at her feet; and his manners were graceful and elegant. So she put her foot on his knee, and the foot was dainty, and the shoes fitted well. So Sir Dietrich put them on for her.

“‘Please to tell me, noble and gracious lady,’ the artful man now began; ‘thou hast probably been wooed by many a man, confess which of them has pleased thee most.’

“Then the Emperor’s daughter replied with a serious mien: ‘Sir, by the purity of my soul, and by my holy baptism! if all the heroes of the world were brought together, not one of them would be found worthy to be called thy equal. Thou art a virtuous and noble man; yet if I could choose freely, I would take a hero of whom I can not help thinking day and night. The messengers whom he sent to woo me were thrown into a deep,

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dreary dungeon. His name is Rother; he lives across the seas, and if he will not become mine I shall remain a maid all the days of my life!

"'Heigho!' said Dietrich, 'if thou wilt wed with Rother, I will bring him hither quickly. We have lived pleasantly together as friends, and he has ever been kind and good to me, although he drove me away from his country.'

"Then the princess replied: 'How canst thou love a man who has banished thee? Ah, now I see it all! Thou art a messenger sent by King Rother. And now speak out forthwith, and hide nothing from me, for what thou shalt tell me, I will keep secret until the day of judgment.'

"When she had thus spoken, the hero looked steadily at her and said: 'Then I will put my trust in God and leave my fate in thy hands. Know then, that thy feet are resting on King Rother's knees!'

"Great was the terror of the gentle maiden. Hastily drawing away her feet, she cried: 'Woe is me! How could I be so ill-bred and thoughtless as to place my foot on thy lap! If God had really sent thee thither, I should be deeply thankful. But how can I trust thee? If thou couldst prove to me the truth of what thou hast told me, I would gladly quit my father's realms with thee, even to-day. There is not a man living whom I would take but thee, if thou wert really King Rother;

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but for the present this must remain unaccomplished.'

"How could I prove it better than through my imprisoned friends?' said the King. 'If they could see me, thou wouldst soon be convinced that I have spoken the truth.'

"Then I will beg my father to let them out,' said the princess. 'But who will prevent their escape?'

"I will look to that,' replied he.

"Then the Emperor's daughter kissed the hero, and he left her chamber in all honor, and returned to his house, his heart full of deep joy.

"At the first dawn of the next day the princess took a staff and put on a black mourning dress, with the pilgrim's badge on her shoulders, as if she wanted to leave the land, and her face was very pale and sad. Thus, she knocked at the Emperor's door and artfully said: 'My dear father! Though still alive, I am yet suffering great torments. I feel very miserable, and who will comfort me? In my dreams, the imprisoned messengers of King Rother have appeared to me, and they look so pale and worn as to leave me no peace. So I must escape from them unless you will at least allow me to comfort the miserable men with good food, wine, and a bath. Let them come out of their prison, if only for three days.'

"Then the Emperor made answer: 'This will I

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grant thee, if thou wilt find me security that they return to their prison on the third day.'

"At the usual hour for supper, the so-called Sir Dietrich with his knights also came to the Emperor's hall, and when the repast was over, and every one was washing his hands, the princess walked round the tables, as if she wanted to choose among the number of rich dukes and noble lords to stand bail. When she came to Dietrich she said: 'Now it is time that thou shouldst help me. Stand bail for thy messengers with thy life.'

"Then he replied: 'I will be surety, most beautiful maiden.' And he pledged his head to the Emperor, who sent out some men to open the prison gate. The wretched messengers were by this time reduced to a state of great weakness. When the doors were opened, the clear daylight shone in, and dazzled the unfortunate men, who had grown unused to it. Then they took the twelve counts, and made them go out. Each one was followed by a knight. They could scarcely walk. Lupolt, their leader, again walked at their head. He wore a torn apron round his loins; his beard was long and shaggy, and his body was covered with sores. Sir Dietrich was overwhelmed with sadness, and he turned his head away, that they might not recognize him; and he could scarcely repress the rising tears which the pitiful sight called forth. He then had them all brought

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to his house, where everything was got ready for their reception, and the counts said to each other, 'Who was he who stood aside? He is surely befriending us.' And they, with their hearts full of old grief, laughed with a new joy; but they did not recognize him.

"On the following day, the Emperor's daughter invited the sorely tried men to court, presented them with good, new garments, ordered a warm bath to be prepared for them, and had a table spread for a sumptuous repast. As soon as the noblemen were seated around it, forgetting their woe for a moment, Sir Dietrich took his harp, and, hiding himself behind a curtain, touched the strings and played one of the melodies which he had before played on the seashore.

"Lupolt, who had raised the cup to his lips, let it fall, so that the wine was all spilled over the table; and another, who was cutting bread, dropped his knife, and all listened wonderingly. Louder and clearer their king's song was heard, and then Lupolt jumped across the table, and all the counts and knights followed him, as if something of their old strength had suddenly returned, and they tore down the curtain, and kissed the harper, and knelt before him, and the joy was indescribable.

"Then the princess knew that he was really and truly King Rother of Vikingland, and she uttered a loud cry of delight, which attracted her Father

Ekkehard

Constantine thitherward; and whether he liked it or not, he could do nothing but join the lovers' hands. The messengers never went back to their dungeon; Rother was no longer called Dietrich, and he kissed his bride and took her home over the seas, and became a very happy man, holding his wife in great honor. And whenever they sat lovingly together, they would say: 'Thanks be to God, to knightly valor, and prudent waiting-woman's cunning.'

"That is the story of King Rother!"

Praxedis had spoken a long while.

"We are well pleased," said the Duchess, "and whether smith Wieland will carry off the prize, after King Rother's history has been told, seems to me rather doubtful."

Master Spazzo was not annoyed at this.

"The waiting-women of Constantinople seem to have eaten wisdom by the spoonful," said he. "But although *I* may be conquered, the last tale has not yet been told." He glanced over at Ekkehard, who was sitting lost in thought. He had not heard much about King Rother. All the time that Praxedis had been speaking, his eyes had been fixed on the Duchess's headband with the rose in it.

"To say the truth," continued Master Spazzo, "I hardly believe the story. Some years ago, when I was sitting in the bishop's courtyard at Constance, drinking a jug of wine, a Greek pedler,

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trafficking with relics, came that way. His name was Daniel, and he had many holy bones and church ornaments, and the like articles, among which there was also an ancient sword, with jewel-set hilt, which he tried to foist on me, saying that it was the sword of King Rother, and if the gold crowns had not then been as scanty with me as the hairs on the pedler's pate, I should have bought it. The man told me that Sir Rother had fought for the Emperor's daughter with that very same sword, with King Ymelot of Babylon; but of golden shoes, waiting-women, or harp-playing, he knew nothing whatever."

"I dare say that many things might still be found in this world which you know nothing about," lightly said Praxedis.

The evening had set in. The moon had risen, shedding her pale light over hills and plain. Strong fragrant perfumes filled the air, and the fireflies were getting ready for flight, in the bushes and crevices of the rocks round about.

A servant came down with some lights, which, being surrounded by linen, saturated with oil, burned brightly and steadily. The air was mild and pleasant.

Burkhard was still sitting contentedly on his stool, his hands folded as in devotion.

"What does our young guest think?" asked the Duchess.

Ekkehard

"I would gladly give my best Latin book, if I could have seen the giant Asprian dashing the lion against the wall," replied he.

"Thou shouldst become a knight, and go out to conquer giants and dragons thyself," jestingly said the Duchess.

This, however, did not convince him. "But we have to fight the Devil himself," said he; "that is better still."

Dame Hadwig was not yet inclined to go indoors. Breaking a twig from the maple tree into two unequal pieces, she stepped up to Ekkehard. He started, all confused.

"Well," said the Duchess, "you must draw. Either you or I!"

"Either you or I," vacantly repeated Ekkehard. He drew out the shorter piece. It slipped out of his hand, while he silently resumed his seat.

"Ekkehard!" sharply exclaimed the Duchess. He looked up.

"You are to relate something!"

"I am to relate something," murmured he, passing his right hand over his forehead. It was burning, and inside it was a storm.

"Ah, yes, I am to relate something. Who is going to play the lute for me?"

He stood up and gazed out into the moonlit night, while the others looked at him in mute wonder, and then he began in a strange, hollow voice:

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"'Tis a short story. There once was a light, which shone brightly, and it shone down from a hill, and it was more radiant and glorious than the rainbow. And it wore a rose under the headband . . ."

"A rose under the headband?" muttered Master Spazzo, shaking his head.

". . . And there was once a dusky moth," continued Ekkehard, still in the same tone, "which flew up to the hill, and which knew that it must perish if it flew into the light. And it did fly in all the same, and the light burned the dark moth, so that it became mere ashes, and never flew any more. Amen!"

Dame Hadwig sprang up, indignantly.

"Is that the whole of your story?" asked she.

"'Tis the whole of it," replied he, with unchanged voice.

"It is time for us to go in," proudly said the Duchess. "The cool night air produces fever."

She walked past Ekkehard with a disdainful look. Burkhard again carried her train, while Ekkehard stood there motionless.

The chamberlain patted him on the shoulder. "The dark moth was a poor fool, Master Chaplain!" said he compassionately.

A sudden gust of wind here put out the lights. "It was a monk," said Ekkehard indifferently. "Sleep well!"

Ekkehard

CHAPTER XXI

REJECTION AND FLIGHT

EKKEHARD had remained sitting in the bower for a long time after the others had gone away, and when at last he also rose he rushed out into the darkness. He did not know whither his feet were carrying him. In the morning he found himself on the top of the Hohenkrähen, silent and deserted since the woman of the wood had left it. The remains of the burned hut formed now but an unshapely mass. On the place where the sitting-room had once been was still the Roman stone with the Mithras. Grass and ferns were growing on it, and a slow-worm was stealthily creeping up on the old weather-beaten idol.

Ekkehard burst into a wild laugh. "The chapel of St. Hadwig!" he cried, striking his breast with his clenched hand. He upset the old Roman stone, and then mounted the rock on the top of the hill. There he threw himself down, pressing his forehead against the cool ground, which had once been touched by Dame Hadwig's foot. Thus he remained for a long time. When the scorching rays of the midday sun were falling vertically down he still lay there, and—slept.

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Toward the evening he returned to the Hohen-twiel, looking hot and excited, and walking with an unsteady gait. Blades of grass clung to the woolen texture of his habit.

The inhabitants of the castle stepped timidly out of his way, as if ill-luck had set her seal on his forehead. At other times they had been used to advancing for his blessing.

The Duchess had noticed his absence without making any inquiries about him. He went up to his tower and seized a parchment, as if he would read. It happened to be Gunzo's libel. "Willingly I would ask you to try the effect of healing medicine, but I fear that his illness is too deeply rooted," was what he read. He laughed. The arched ceiling threw back an echo, which made him jump up as if he wanted to find out who had laughed at him. Then he stepped up to the window and looked down into the depth below. It was deep, far deeper than he had imagined, and, overcome by a sudden giddiness, he started back.

His eye now fell on the small phial which old Thieto had given him. With a painful recollection he thought of the blind old man! "Serving women is an evil thing for him who wishes to remain in the paths of virtue," he had said when Ekkehard took leave.

He tore the seal off and poured the water from the Jordan over his head and eyes. It was too late.

Ekkehard

Whole floods of holy water will not extinguish the inward fire, unless one dives down, never to rise to the surface again. Yet a momentary feeling of quiet came over him.

"I will pray to be delivered from temptation," said he. He threw himself on his knees, but after a while he fancied that he heard the pigeons swarming round his head, as they did on the day when he first entered his chamber. Only they had mocking faces now, and had a contemptuous look about their beaks.

He got up and slowly descended the winding staircase to the castle chapel. The altar, which had often witnessed his former earnest devotions, was a safer place for him, he thought. The chapel was as it had always been, dark and silent. Six ponderous pillars with square capitals, adorned with leaf-work, supported the vault. A faint streak of daylight fell in through the narrow window. The deep niche where the altar stood was but faintly illuminated; the golden background of the mosaic picture of the Redeemer alone shone with a soft glitter. Greek artists had transplanted the forms of their church ornaments to the German rock. In white flowing garments, with a golden red aureole round his head, the Saviour's lean figure stood there, with the fingers of the right hand extended in the act of blessing.

Ekkehard knelt before the altar steps, his fore-

Ekkehard

head resting on the cold stone flags. Thus he remained, wrapt in prayer. "Oh thou, that hast taken the sins and sufferings of the whole world on thyself, send out one ray of thy grace on me, unworthy object." He looked up with a fixed stare as if he expected the figure to step down and hold out his hand to him.

"I am here at thy feet, like Peter, surrounded by tempest, and the waves will not bear me up! Save me, O Lord! save me as thou didst him, when thou walkedst over the raging billows, extending thy hand to him and saying, 'Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?'"

But no such sign was given him.

Ekkehard's brain was giving way.

A rustling, like that of a woman's garments, now became audible, but Ekkehard did not hear it.

Dame Hadwig had come down, impelled by a strange impulse. Since her feelings for the monk had undergone a change, the image of her late husband recurred oftener to her inward mind. This was but natural. As the one receded into the background, the other must come forward again. The latter reading of Virgil had also its share in this, as there had been so much said about the memory of Sichæus.

The following day was the anniversary of Sir Burkhard's death. With his lance and shield by his side, the old Duke lay buried in the chapel be-

Ekkehard

low. His tomb was covered by a rough stone slab. A sarcophagus of gray sandstone stood near it, resting on small clumsy pillars with Ionic headpieces, which again rested on quaint, ugly beasts. This stone coffin Dame Hadwig had had made for herself. Every year, on the anniversary of the Duke's death, she had it carried up, filled with corn and fruit, which were distributed among the poor—food for the sustenance of life thus coming from the resting-place of the dead. It was an old and pious custom.

To-day she intended to pray on her husband's grave. The reigning twilight concealed Ekkehard's kneeling figure. She did not see him.

Suddenly she started up from her kneeling posture. A laugh, soft yet piercing, struck her ear. She knew the voice well. Ekkehard had risen and was reciting the following words of the Psalms:

"Hide me under the shadow of thy wings. From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about."

He said it in a sinister tone. It was not the voice of prayer.

Dame Hadwig bent down once more beside the sarcophagus, on which she would gladly have placed another to hide her from Ekkehard's view. She had no longer any wish to be alone with him. Her heart beat calmly in his presence now.

He went to the door, about to go, when sud-

Ekkehard

denly he looked back once more. The everlasting lamp was softly rocking to and fro over Dame Hadwig's head. Ekkehard's eye pierced the twilight this time, and with one bound—quicker than St. Bernard's when the Madonna beckoned to him in the cathedral at Speier—he stood before the Duchess. He cast a long and penetrating look at her. Rising from the ground, and seizing the edge of the stone sarcophagus with her right hand, she confronted him, while the everlasting lamp over her head was still gently swinging to and fro on its silken cord.

"Thrice blessed are the dead, for one prays for them," said Ekkehard, interrupting the silence.

Dame Hadwig made no reply.

"Will you pray for me also when I am dead?" continued he. "Oh no, you must not pray for me! But you must let a goblet be made out of my skull, and when you take another monk away from the monastery of St. Gallus, you must offer him the welcome draft in it, and give him my greeting! You can put your own lips to it also; it will not crack. But then you must wear the headband with the rose in it."

"Ekkehard!" said the Duchess, "you are going too far."

He put his right hand up to his forehead.

"Ah, yes!" said he in a soft, mournful voice; "ah, yes! . . . the Rhine is going too far also.

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They have stopped its course with gigantic rocks, but it has gnawed them all through, and is now rushing and roaring onward, carrying everything before it in its glorious, new-won liberty! . . . And God has gone too far also, methinks; for he has allowed the Rhine to be, and the Hohentwiel and the Duchess of Suabia, and the tonsure on my head."

The Duchess began to shiver. Such an outbreak of long repressed feeling she had not expected. But it was too late; her heart remained untouched.

"You are ill," she said.

"Ill?" said he; "it is merely retribution. More than a year ago, at Whitsuntide, when there was as yet no Hohentwiel for me, I carried the coffin of St. Gallus in solemn procession out of the cloister, and a woman threw herself on the ground before me. 'Get up,' cried I, but she remained prostrate in the dust. 'Walk over me with thy relic, oh priest, so that I may recover,' cried she, and my foot stepped over her. That woman suffered from the heartache. Now 'tis reversed."

Tears interrupted his voice. He could not go on. Then he threw himself at Dame Hadwig's feet, clasping the hem of her garment. His whole frame was convulsed with trembling.

Dame Hadwig was touched—touched against her will; as if from the hem of her garment a

Ekkehard

feeling of unutterable woe thrilled her up to her very heart.

"Get up," said she, "and try to think of other things. You still owe us a story. You will soon have conquered this weakness."

Then Ekkehard laughed through his tears.

"A story!" cried he; "yes, a story! But it must not be told. Come, let us act the story! From the height of yonder tower one can see so far into the distance, and so deep into the valley below—it is all so sweet, and deep, and tempting. What right has the ducal castle to hold us back? Nobody who wishes to go down into that depth below need count more than three—and we should flutter and glide softly into the arms of Death, awaiting us down there. Then I should be no longer a monk, and I might wind my arms around you, and he who sleeps here in the ground"—striking Sir Burkhard's tombstone with his clenched hand—"shall not prevent me. If the old man should come, I would not let you go, and we will float up to the tower again, and sit where we sat before, and we will read the *Æneid* to the end, and you must wear the rose under your headband, as if nothing whatever had happened. The gate we will keep well locked against the Duke, and we will laugh at all evil backbiting tongues, and folks will say, when sitting at their fireplaces of a winter's evening, 'That is a pretty tale of the faithful

Ekkehard

Ekkehard, who slew the Emperor Ermenrich for hanging the Harlungen brothers, and who afterward sat for many hundred years before Dame Venus's mountain, with his white staff in his hands, meaning to sit there until the day of judgment, to warn off all pilgrims coming to the mountain. But at last he grew tired of it, and ran away and became a monk at St. Gall, and he fell down an abyss and was killed, and he is now sitting beside a proud, pale woman, reading Virgil to her. And at midnight may be heard the words, "If thou commandest, O Queen, to renew the unspeakable sorrow." And then she must kiss him, whether she will or not, for death makes up for the pleasures denied us in life.' "

He had uttered all this with a wild, wandering look in his face; and now his voice failed, and he broke into sobs. Dame Hadwig had stood motionless all this time. It seemed as if a gleam of pity were lighting up her cold eye, as she now bent down her head toward him.

"Ekkehard," said she, "you must not speak of death. This is madness. We both live, you and I!"

He did not stir. Then she lightly laid her hand on his burning forehead. This touch sent a wild thrill through his brain. He sprang up.

"You are right!" cried he. "We both live, you and I!"

A dizzy darkness clouded his eyes as he stepped

Ekkehard

forward; winding his arms round her proud form, he fiercely pressed her to his bosom, and a kiss burned on her lips, suffocating her words of resistance.

Raising her up toward the altar, as if she were an offering he was about to make, he cried out to the dark and solemn-looking picture, "Why dost thou hold out thy gold-glittering fingers so quietly, instead of blessing us?"

The Duchess had started like a wounded deer. One moment, and all the passion of her hurt pride lent her strength to push the frenzied man back, and to free herself at least partly from his embrace. He had still got one arm round her waist, when the church-door was suddenly opened and a flaring streak of daylight broke through the darkness. They were no longer alone.

Rudimann, the cellarer from the Reichenau, stepped over the threshold, while other figures became visible in the background.

The Duchess had waxed pale with shame and anger. A tress of her long dark hair had become loosened and was streaming down her back.

"I beg your pardon," said the man from the Reichenau, with grinning politeness. "My eyes have beheld nothing."

Then Dame Hadwig, ridding herself entirely from Ekkehard's hold, cried out: "Yes, I say! Yes, you have seen a madman, who has forgotten

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himself and God. I should be sorry for your eyes if they had beheld nothing, for I would have had them torn out!"

It was in the haughtiest tone imaginable that she pronounced these words.

Then Rudimann began to understand the strange scene.

"I had forgotten," said he in cutting accents, "that the man who stands there is one of those to whom wise men have applied the words of St. Hieronymus, when he said that their manners were more befitting dandies and bridegrooms than the elect of the Lord."

Ekkehard stood there, leaning against a pillar, with arms stretched out in the air, like Odysseus when he wanted to embrace the shadow of his mother. Rudimann's words roused him from his dreams.

"Who dares to come between her and me?" cried he threateningly. But Rudimann, patting him on the shoulder with an insolent familiarity, said: "Calm yourself, my good friend; we have only come to deliver a note into your hands. St. Gallus can no longer allow the wisest of all his disciples to remain out in this shilly-shally world. You are called home! And don't forget the stick with which you are wont to ill-treat your confraters who like to snatch a kiss at vintage-time, you chaste censor," he added in a low whisper.

Ekkehard

Ekkehard stepped back. Wild longings, the pain of separation, burning, passionate love, and sneering, taunting words—all these overwhelmed him at once. He made a few steps toward the Duchess; but the chapel was already filling. The Abbot of Reichenau had himself come to witness Ekkehard's departure.

"It will be a difficult task to get him away," he had said to the cellarer. It was easy enough now. Monks and lay-brothers came in after the Abbot.

"Sacrilege!" Rudimann called out to them. "He has laid his wanton hand on his mistress, even before the altar!"

Then Ekkehard could restrain himself no longer. To have his heart's noblest secret profaned by insolent coarseness—a pearl thrown before swine! Never! He tore down the everlasting lamp, and swung the heavy vessel over his head. The light went out; a moment after a hollow groan was heard, and the cellarer lay with bleeding head on the stone flags. The lamp lay beside him. Then there followed a fierce struggle, fighting, confusion—all was coming to an end with Ekkehard. They had got the better of him, and tearing off the cord which served him as a belt, they tied his hands together.

There he stood, the handsome, youthful figure, now the very picture of woe, resembling a broken-winged eagle. His eyes sent one mournful, trou-

Ekkehard

bled, and appealing look at the Duchess—who turned her head away.

“Do what you think right,” said she to the Abbot, sweeping proudly through the ranks of the lookers-on.

A cloud of smoke met her outside, while the voices of loud, noisy merriment were heard from the castle-gate, outside of which a great bonfire, made up of resinous pine branches, was burning. The servants of the castle were dancing around it, throwing flowers into the flames, and at that moment Audifax, putting his arm round the companion of his adventures, had jumped with her through the flames, uttering a loud cry of delight.

“Where does all this smoke come from?” asked Dame Hadwig of Praxedis, who was coming toward her.

“Solstice! Midsummer-day!” said the Greek maid.

It was a dreary, uncomfortable evening. The Duchess had locked herself up in her private chambers, refusing admittance to every one.

Ekkehard, meanwhile, had been thrown into a dungeon, by the order of the Abbot. In the same tower, in the airy upper story of which was his chamber, there was a damp, dark vault, the floor of which had fragments of old tombstones lying about; they had been brought there when the cas-

Ekkehard

tle chapel had been renovated. A bundle of straw had been thrown in for him, and a monk was sitting outside to guard the entrance.

Burkhard, the cloister pupil, ran up and down, wailing and wringing his hands. He could not understand the fate which had befallen his uncle. The servants were all putting their heads together, eagerly whispering, and gossiping, as if hundred-tongued Rumor had been sitting on the roof, spreading her falsehoods about. "He tried to murder the Duchess," said one. "He has practised the Devil's own arts with that big book of his," said another. "To-day is St. John's Day, when the Devil has no power, and so he could not help him."

At the well in the courtyard, Rudimann, the cellarer, was standing, letting the clear water flow over his head. Ekkehard had given him a sharp cut, out of which the dark blood was slowly trickling down into the water.

While he was thus occupied, Praxedis came down, looking pale and depressed. She was the only being who had sincere, heartfelt pity for the prisoner. On seeing the cellarer, she ran into the garden, tore up a blue cornflower with the roots, and then, bringing it to him, said: "Take that into your right hand until it gets warm, and then the bleeding will cease. Or shall I fetch you some linen to dress the wound?"

Ekkehard

The cellarer shook his head.

"It will stop in time," said he. "'Tis not the first time that I have been bled. Keep your corn-flowers for yourself."

But Praxedis was anxious to conciliate Ekkehard's enemy. So she fetched some linen, with which he allowed his wound to be dressed, but did not, however, offer any thanks for it.

"Are you not going to let Ekkehard out to-day?" asked she.

"To-day?" Rudimann repeated sneeringly. "Do you feel inclined to weave a garland for the standard-bearer of Antichrist, the leading horse of Satan's car, whom you have petted and spoiled up here, as if he were the darling son Benjamin himself? To-day indeed! When a month has passed you may put the question again, over there," pointing toward the Helvetian mountains.

Praxedis was frightened. "Then what do you intend to do with him?"

"Whatever is right," replied Rudimann, with an evil laugh. "Wantonness, deeds of violence, disobedience, haughtiness, sacrilege, blasphemy—there are scarcely names enough for all his nefarious acts; but, thank God, there are yet means for their expiation!" He made a motion with his hand like that of flogging. "Ah yes, plenty of means of expiation, gentle mistress! We are going to write the catalogue of his sins on his back."

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"Have pity," said Praxedis, "for he is a sick man."

"For that very reason we are going to cure him. When he has been tied to the pillar for an hour or so, and half a dozen rods have been flogged to pieces on his bleeding back, then all his spleen and his deviltries will vanish!"

"For God's sake!" exclaimed the terrified girl.

"Calm yourself, for that is not all. A stray lamb must be delivered up to the fold it belongs to. There he will find good shepherds who will look after the rest. Sheep-shearing, sweet mistress, sheep-shearing! Then they will cut off the hair of his head, which will make it a deal cooler; and if you feel inclined to undertake a pilgrimage to St. Gall, a year hence, you will see on Sundays and holidays somebody standing barefooted before the church door, and his head will be as bare as a corn field after harvest time, and the penitential garb will become him very nicely. What do you think? The heathenish goings on with Virgil are at an end now."

"He is innocent!" said Praxedis.

"Oh," said the cellarer sneeringly, "we shall never harm innocence! He need only prove himself so by God's ordeal. If he takes the ring out of the kettle of boiling water with unburnt arm, our Abbot himself will give him the blessing; and I will say that it was all a delusion of the Devil's

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own making, when my eyes beheld the lady Duchess clasped in the arms of his holiness, brother Ekkehard."

Praxedis wept. "Dear, venerable Master Rudimann!" said she, imploringly.

Throwing an ugly leer at the Greek maiden, he said with pinched lips: "So it will be. I might, however, perhaps be induced to interfere on his behalf, if—"

"If?" asked Praxedis, eagerly.

"If you would be pleased to leave your door open to-night, so that I could communicate the result of my endeavors to you."

Playfully drawing the ample folds of his habit together, so that the outlines of his portly figure became accentuated, he assumed a complacent and expectant attitude. Praxedis stepped back, and stamped her foot on the blue cornflower.

"You are a bad, wicked man!" she cried, turning her back on him.

Rudimann, who knew how to interpret physiognomy, clearly saw from the twitching of Praxedis's eyelids, and the angry frown on her forehead, that her door would be locked, now and forever, against all the cellarers in Christendom.

She went away. "Have you any further commands?" asked she, once more looking back.

"Yes, thou Greek wasp! A jug of vinegar, if you please. I want to lay my rods in it; the writ-

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ing is easier then, and will not fade away so soon. I have as yet never had the good fortune to flog an interpreter of Virgil. Such a scholar verily deserves particular attention."

Burkhard, the cloister pupil, was still sitting under the linden tree, sobbing. Praxedis gave him a kiss in passing, chiefly to spite the cellarer. She went up to the Duchess, intending to implore her compassion for Ekkehard on her knees; but the door remained locked against her. Dame Hadwig was deeply hurt. If the monks of the Reichenau had not come in upon them, she might have pardoned Ekkehard's frenzy all the more as she herself had sowed the seeds of all this, but now it had become a public scandal, which demanded punishment. The fear of gossiping tongues influences many an action.

The Abbot had sent her the letter from St. Gall. "St. Benedict's rules," so the letter said, "exacted not only the outward forms of a monastic life, but the self-denial of heart and soul, which forms the spirit of it!" Ekkehard was to return. From Gunzo's libel some parts were quoted against him.

It was all perfectly indifferent to the Duchess. What his fate would be, if delivered into the hands of his antagonists, she knew quite well. Yet she was determined to do nothing for him. Praxedis knocked at her door a second time, but again it was not opened.

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"Oh thou poor moth," said she sadly.

Ekkehard meanwhile lay in his dungeon like one who had dreamt some wild dream. Four bare walls surrounded him; some faint gleams of light falling in from above. Now and then he shivered as with cold. By degrees a melancholy smile of resignation settled on his lips, but this did not always remain there; bursts of anger, which made him clench his fists, interrupted it.

It is the same with the human mind as with the sea. Though the tempest may have blown over, the surge is yet stronger and more impetuous than before; and now and then some mighty straggling wave dashes wildly up, frightening the seagulls away from the rocks.

But Ekkehard's spirit was not yet broken. He was still too young for that. He began to reflect on his position. The view into the future was not very cheering. He knew the rules of his order well, and that the men from Reichenau were his enemies.

With big strides he paced up and down the narrow space. "Great God, whom we may invoke in the hour of affliction, how will this all end?"

He shut his eyes, and threw himself on the bundle of straw. Confused visions passed before his soul. Thus he saw with his inward eye how they would drag him out in the early morning. The Abbot would be sitting on his high stone chair, with the hooked staff in his hand, in sign

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of his sitting in judgment, and then they would read out a long bill of complaints against him—all this in the same place in which he had once sprung out of the sedan chair, with such a jubilant heart, and in which he had preached his sermon against the Huns on that solemn Good Friday. And now they were all against him!

"What shall I do?" thought he. "With my hand on my heart, and my eyes raised toward Heaven, I shall say: 'Ekkehard is not guilty!' Then the judges will say: 'Prove it!'" The big kettle is fetched, the fire lighted beneath, so that the water hisses and bubbles. Then the Abbot draws off the golden ring from his finger. They push up the right sleeve of his habit, while solemn penitential psalms are chanted around them. "I conjure thee, spirit of the water, that the Devil quit thee, and that thou serve the Lord, to make known the truth, like to the fiery furnace of the King of Babylon, when he had the three men thrown into it!" Thus would the Abbot address the boiling water; and "Dip in thy arm, and fetch the ring," says he to the accused. . . .

"Just God, how will thy ordeal speak?" Wild doubts were besetting Ekkehard's soul. He believed in himself and his good cause, but his faith was less strong in the dreadful means by which priestcraft and church laws sought to arrive at God's decision.

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In the library of his monastery there was a little book, bearing the title: "Against the inveterate error of the belief, that through fire, water, or single combat, the truth of God's judgment could be revealed."

This book he had once read, and he remembered it well. It was to prove, that with these ordeals, which were an inheritance from the ancient heathen time, it was as the excellent Godfrey of Strassburg has expressed it in later days, namely, "that the best Christian is as combustible as an old rag."

"And what if no miracle happens?"

His thoughts were inclined to dark and despondent doubts. "With burnt arm, to be proclaimed guilty and to be flogged, while *she* perhaps would stand on the balcony looking on, as if it were being done to an entire stranger. O Lord of heaven and earth, send down thy lightning!"

Yet hope does not entirely forsake even the most despairing. Then he fancied again how, through all this shame and misery, a piercing "Stop!" was heard, and how she flew down with disheveled locks, and in her rustling ducal mantle drove his tormentors away, as the Saviour drove out the usurers from the temple. And then, when all were gone, she presented him both her hand and lips to receive the kiss of reconciliation. Long and ardently his fantasy dwelt on that beautiful pos-

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sibility, which filled his heart with a soft consolation, and he spoke with the words of the preacher: "As gold is purified from dross in the fire, so the heart of man is purified by sorrow."

He now heard a slight noise in the antechamber of his dungeon. A stone jug was put down. "You are to drink like a man," said a voice to the lay-brother on guard, "for on St. John's Night, all sorts of unearthly visitors people the air and pass over our castle. So you must take care to strengthen your courage. There's another jug set ready, when this is finished."

It was Praxedis who had brought the wine. Ekkehard did not understand what she wanted. "Then she also is false," thought he. "God protect me!"

He closed his eyes and soon fell asleep. Some hours later he awoke. The wine had evidently been to the lay brother's taste, for he was lustily singing a song in praise of the four goldsmiths who had refused the making of heathenish idols at Rome; for which they had suffered martyrdom. With his heavy sandal-clad foot he kept beating time on the stone flags. Ekkehard heard that another jug of wine was brought in. The singing became always louder and more uproarious. Then he held a soliloquy, in which he spoke much about Italy, and good fare, and the church of Saint Agnes Without the Walls, until he suddenly ceased

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talking, while his snoring could be heard very plainly through the stone walls.

Everything was silent around. It was about midnight. Ekkehard lay in a half-slumbering state, when he heard the bolts of the door swiftly withdrawn. He remained lying where he was. A muffled figure came in, and a soft little hand was laid on the slumberer's forehead. He jumped up.

"Hush!" whispered Praxedis, for it was she.

When everybody had gone to rest, Praxedis had kept awake. "The bad cellarer shall not have the satisfaction of punishing our poor melancholy teacher," she had said to herself; and woman's cunning always finds some way and means to accomplish its schemes. Wrapping herself up in a gray cloak, she had stolen down on tiptoe. No special artifices were necessary, for the lay brother was sleeping soundly. If it had been otherwise, the Greek would have frightened him by some ghost trickery. That would have been her plan.

"You must fly!" said she to Ekkehard. "They mean to do their worst to you."

"I know it," replied he, sadly.

"Then, come."

He shook his head. "I prefer to submit and to suffer," said he.

"Don't be a fool," whispered Praxedis. "First you built your castle on a glittering rainbow, and now that it has all tumbled down, you will allow

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them to ill-treat you into the bargain? As if *they* had a right to drag you away and to flog you! And you will let them have the pleasure of witnessing your humiliation? . . . It would be a nice spectacle for them, to be sure! 'One does not see an honest man hanged every day,' said a man to me once in Constantinople, when I asked him why he was running."

"Where should I go to?" asked Ekkehard.

"Neither to the Reichenau nor to your monastery," said Praxedis. "There is still many a hiding-place left in this world." She was getting impatient, and seizing Ekkehard by the hand she dragged him on. "Come!" she whispered. He allowed himself to be led.

They slunk past the sleeping watchman; and now they stood in the courtyard, where the fountain was splashing merrily. Ekkehard bent over the spout, and took a long draft of the cool water.

"All is over now," said he. "And now away!"

It was a stormy night. "As the bridge is drawn up, you can not go out by the doorway," said Praxedis, "but you can get down between the rocks, on the eastern side. Our shepherd-boy has tried that path before."

They entered the little garden. A gust of wind was rocking the branches of the maple tree to and fro. Ekkehard felt as if he were in a dream.

He mounted the battlement. Steep and rugged

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the gray rocks sloped into the valley, that now looked like a dark yawning abyss. Black clouds were chasing each other along the dusky sky, weird uncouth shapes, resembling two bears pursuing a winged dragon. After a while, the fantastic forms united into one shapeless mass, which the wind drifted onward toward the Lake of Constance, that glittered faintly in the distance. The whole landscape could only be seen in indistinct outlines.

"Blessings on your path," said Praxedis.

Ekkehard sat perfectly motionless on the battlement, still holding the Greek maiden's hand clasped in his. His lips could not express the feelings of gratitude which pervaded his whole being. Suddenly he felt her cheek pressed against his, and a trembling kiss imprinted on his forehead, followed by a pearly tear. Praxedis then softly drew away her hand.

"Don't forget," said she, "that you still owe us a story. May God lead your steps back again to this place some day, so that we may hear it from your own lips."

Ekkehard now let himself down. Waving one last farewell with his hand, he soon disappeared from her sight. The stillness of night was interrupted by a loud clatter and booming among the cliffs. A piece of rock had become loosened, and fell noisily down into the valley. Another followed somewhat slower, and on this Ekkehard was

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sitting, guiding it as a rider does his horse. So he went down the sloping precipice, through the black night—farewell!

She crossed herself and went back, smiling through her tears. The lay-brother was still fast asleep. While crossing the courtyard, Praxedis spied a basket filled with ashes, which she seized, and softly stealing back into Ekkehard's dungeon she poured out its contents in the middle of the room, as if this were all that was left of the prisoner's earthly remains.

CHAPTER XXII

NEW SURROUNDINGS

AND now, beloved reader, we must bid thee gird thy loins, take thy staff in hand, and follow us up into the mountains. From the lowlands of the Bodensee our tale now takes us over to the Helvetian Alps. There the Sentis stretches grandly upward into the blue air—when he does not prefer to don his cloud-cap—smilingly looking down into the depths below, where the towns of men shrivel to the size of ant-hills. All around him there is a company of fine, stalwart fellows of the same mettle, and there they put their bold heads together, and jestingly blow misty veils into each other's

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faces. Over their glaciers and ravines a mighty roaring and rustling is heard at times. What they whispered to each other respecting the ways and doings of mankind had already a somewhat contemptuous tinge a thousand years ago, and since then it has not become much better, I fear.

About ten days after the monks of the Reichenau had found nothing but a heap of ashes instead of their prisoner in the castle dungeon, and had debated a good deal whether the Devil had burned him up at midnight, or whether he had escaped, a man was walking up the hills along the white foaming Sitter, over luxuriant meadow-lands interspersed with rocks.

He wore a mantle made of wolves' skins over his monkish garb; a leathern pouch at his side, and he carried a spear in his right hand. Often he pushed the iron point into the ground, and leaned on the butt-end, using the weapon thus as a mountain stick.

Round about there was perfect silence and solitude. Long stretches of mist were hovering over the wild valley, where the Sitter comes out of the Seealpsee; while at the side, a towering wall of rocks, fringed by scanty green plants, rose up toward heaven.

The mountain glens, which in the present days are inhabited by a merry and numerous race of herdsmen, were then but scantily peopled. Only

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the cell of the Abbot of St. Gall stood there in the valley, surrounded by a few small, humble cottages.

After the bloody battle of Zülpich, a handful of liberty-loving Allemannic men, who could not learn to bend their necks to the Franconian yoke, had settled down in that wilderness. Their descendants were still living there, in scattered, shingle-covered houses, and in summer they drove their herds up into the Alps. They were a race of strong and healthy mountaineers, who, untouched by the goings-on in the world at large, enjoyed a simple free life, which they bequeathed to the following generations.

The path which was followed by our traveler became steeper and rougher. He now stood before a steep overhanging wall of rocks. A heavy drop of water had fallen on his head from above; upon which he cast up a searching look to see whether the grim canopy of stones would yet delay falling down till he had passed by. Rocky walls, however, luckily can remain longer in an oblique position than any structure made by human hands, so nothing fell down but a second drop.

Leaning with his left hand on the stone wall, the man continued his way, which, however, became narrower with every step he took. The dark precipice at his side came nearer and nearer; a giddy depth yawning up at him . . . and now all traces of a pathway ceased altogether. Two

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mighty pine trunks were laid over the abyss, serving as a bridge.

"It must be done," said the man, boldly stepping over it. Heaving a deep sigh of relief when his feet touched ground again on the other side, he turned round to inspect the dangerous passage somewhat more at his leisure.

It was a narrow promontory, above and below which there was a steep, yellowish-gray wall of rocks. In the depth below, scarcely visible, was the mountain brook Sitter, like a silver band in the green valley, while the sea-green mirror of the Seealpsee seemed to hide itself shyly between the dark fir trees. Opposite, in their armor of ice and snow, there rose the host of mountain-giants; and the pen feels a shudder of delight pass through it when called upon to write down their names. The long and bewildering Kamor; the tremendous walls of the Boghartenfirst; the Sigelsalp and Maarwiese, on whose slopes grows luxuriant vegetation, like moss on the roofs of old houses; and then the mysterious keeper of the secret of the lake, the "Old Man," with his deeply furrowed stone forehead and hoary head—the chancellor and bosom friend of the mighty Sentis.

"Ye mountains and vales, praise the Lord!" exclaimed the wanderer, overwhelmed by the grandeur of the spectacle before him. Many hundreds of mountain-swallows fluttered out of the crevices

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between the rocks. Their appearance was like a good omen for the lonely traveler.

He took a few steps onward. At a spot where the wall of rocks was deeply fissured he saw a double cavern. A simple cross, made of rudely carved wood, stood beside it. Stems of fir trees, heaped up on one side, and interlaced with branches of the same, in the manner of a block-house, bore witness to its being a human habitation. Not a sound interrupted the stillness around.

The stranger knelt down before the cross and prayed there a long while.

It was Ekkehard, and the place where he knelt was the "Wildkirchlein," or "Chapel of the Wilderness."

He had reached the valley in safety after Praxedis had freed him. The next morning found him weary and exhausted at the door of old Moengal at Radolfszell.

"Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people and go from them!" said he in the words of the prophet, after he had told the parish priest all that had happened to him.

Then the old man pointed over toward the Sentis. "Thou art right," said Moengal. "The holy Gallus did the same. 'Into the wilderness will I go, and there shall I wait for Him, who will restore my soul's health.' Perhaps he would

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never have become a saint if he had thought and acted differently. Try to conquer thy grief. When the eagle feels sick, and his eyes grow dim, then he rises heavenward, as far as his wings will carry him. The nearness of the sun gives a new youth. Do thou the same. I know a bonny nook for thee to recover thy health in."

He then described the road to Ekkehard.

"Thou wilt find a man up there," continued he, "who has not seen much of the world for the last twenty years. His name is Gottschalk. Give him my greeting, and let us hope that God has forgiven him his trespasses."

The parish priest did not say for what sin his old friend was doing penance up there. He had once been sent to Italy, when times were bad, to buy corn. When he got to Verona he was well received by the quarrelsome Bishop Ratherius, and he held his devotions in the venerable cathedral where the remains of St. Anastasia lay unlocked in a golden shrine; and the church was deserted, and the Devil tempted Gottschalk to take a keepsake to Germany. So he took as much of the saint's body as he could carry away under his habit: an arm, a foot, and a part of the spine, and secretly departed with his spoil. But from that hour he had lost his inward peace. By day and night the saint appeared to him in her torn and mutilated condition, walking with crutches and

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demanding back her arm and her foot. Over mountains and Alpine glens she followed him, and threateningly approached him even on the threshold of his own cloister. Then he threw away the stolen limbs, and fled, half insane, to the heights of the Sentis, there to expiate his heavy sin in the hermit's cell which he erected for himself.

For two days old Moengal secreted his young friend in his cell, and then he rowed him across the lake during the night-time. "Don't go back to thy convent," said he when they were about to part company, "lest their tittle-tattle should be the ruin of thee. Jeers and derision are worse than punishment. 'Tis true that thou deservest some lecturing; but that must be done for thee by the fresh mountain breezes, which are better entitled to set thee right again than thy fellow-monks."

A spear and a wolf's skin were his parting gifts to Ekkehard.

Stealthily he continued his journey at night-time, and it was with bitterness of heart that like a stranger he passed his monastery, which still bore visible traces of the ravages of the Huns. Some of the windows were lighted up, and seemed to beckon to him; but he only hurried onward the quicker. The Abbot's cell in the mountains he also passed by without entering it. He did not wish to be recognized by any one belonging to the monastery.

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His prayers were ended. Wistfully he gazed at the entrance of the cavern, waiting for Gottschalk, the hermit, to come out and welcome him. But nobody appeared; the cavern was empty.

Sancta Anastasia ignosce raptori! Holy Anastasia, pardon thy ravisher! was written with juice from Alpine herbs on the bright-colored rock. A stone trough caught up the water which came trickling through the crevices. It was so full that the water ran over.

Ekkehard entered the cell. Some earthen dishes stood beside an old stone flag, which probably had served as a hearth. In a corner there lay a coarse fishing-net, as well as a hammer and spade, a rusty hatchet, and a quantity of cut pine logs.

On some wooden boards was a sort of couch, consisting of straw and dry leaves, which looked rotten and decayed. Two rats, frightened by Ekkehard's entrance, ran to hide in a crevice.

"Gottschalk," cried Ekkehard, using his hand like a speaking-trumpet. Then he uttered a sort of shout, such as is customary among the mountaineers in those parts; but nobody answered. In a jug the milk it had once contained had become a crusty substance. Mournfully Ekkehard stepped out again on the narrow strip of ground which separated the cavern from the precipice.

Gazing over to the left, he could see a small bit of the blue Bodensee, peering out behind the moun-

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tains. All the magnificence of the Alpine world, however, could not banish a feeling of unutterable woe from his heart. Alone and God-forsaken he stood there on the solitary height. He strained his faculty of hearing to the utmost, in the hope of catching the sound of a human voice, but the low and monotonous moaning of the wind in the pine wood below was all that he heard.

His eyes became moist.

It was getting late. What now? . . . The cravings of hunger drew off his attention for the moment. He still had provisions for three days with him. So he sat down before the cavern and took his evening meal, moistening his bread with the tears he could not restrain.

His mountain threw long, purple shadows on the opposite rocks, whose peaks only were still glowing in the sunshine.

"As long as the cross stands on yonder rock I shall not be entirely forsaken," said he. He then collected some grass that grew outside and prepared himself a new couch in the place of the old one. The cool evening air began to be felt. So he wrapped himself up in Moengal's mantle and lay down. Sleep is the best cure for the sufferings of youth, and in spite of heartache and loneliness it soon closed Ekkehard's eyelids.

The first dawn of morning rose over the head of the Kamor, and only the morning-star was still

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shining when Ekkehard started up from his slumbers. It was as if he had heard the merry tones of a herdsman's shout, and on looking up he saw a light shining out from the darkest recess of the cavern. He believed himself to be under the delusion of a dream, that he was still in his dungeon, and that Praxedis was coming to free him. But the light came nearer and proved to be a torch of pine-wood. A young girl, with looped-up petticoats, was carrying this primitive candle. He jumped up. Without showing either fear or surprise, she stood before him, and said: "God's welcome to you."

It was a bold, half-wild looking maiden, with olive complexion and fiery sparkling eyes. Her dark abundant tresses were fastened behind by a massive silver pin in the shape of a spoon. The braided basket on her back, and the Alpine stick in her right hand, marked her as being an inhabitant of the mountains.

"Holy Gallus, protect me from new temptation," thought Ekkehard; but she called out cheerfully: "Again I say be welcome! My father will be very glad to hear that we have a new mountain brother. One can well see by the little milk which the cows give that old Gottschalk is dead; he has said so many a time."

It did not sound like the voice of a female demon.

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Ekkehard was still sleepy and yawned.

"May God reward you!" ejaculated the maid.

"Why did you say, 'May God reward you'?"

"Because you have not swallowed me up," laughed she, and before he could put any more queries she ran away with her torch, and disappeared in the back of the cavern.

Presently she returned, however, followed by a gray-bearded herdsman, wrapped in a mantle made of lambs' skins.

"Father will not believe it!" cried she.

The herdsman now took a deliberate survey of Ekkehard. He was a hale and hardy man, who in the days of his youth could throw a stone of a hundredweight above twenty paces without losing an inch of his ground. His tanned face and his bare sinewy arms were signs of his not yet having lost much of his strength.

"So you are going to be our new mountain brother?" said he, good-naturedly extending his hand. "Well, that's right!"

Ekkehard was a little embarrassed at the strangeness of the apparition.

"I intended to pay a visit to Brother Gottschalk," said he.

"Zounds! there you are too late," said the herdsman. "He lost his life last autumn. 'Twas a grievous affair. Look there!"—pointing to a wall of rocks in the depth below—"on yonder slope he

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went to gather dry leaves; I was there myself to help him. Suddenly he started up, as if he had been bitten by a snake, and, pointing over at the Hohenkasten, he cried: 'Holy Anastasia, thou art made whole again, and standest on both feet, and beckonest to me with both thy arms!'—and down he jumped, as if there had been no abyss between the rock he stood on and the Hohenkasten. With a '*Kyrie eleison!*' he went down into the frightful depth. May God have mercy on his soul! It was only this spring that we found the body, wedged in between the rocks; and the vultures had carried off one arm and one leg, nobody knows where to."

"Don't frighten him!" said the maiden, giving her father a nudge.

"You can remain here all the same," continued he; "you shall get all that we gave to Gottschalk—milk and cheese, and three goats, which may graze wherever they like. And if that won't satisfy you, you can ask for more, for we are no niggards and misers up here. In return you will preach us a sermon each Sunday, and pronounce a blessing over meadows and pasture-grounds, so that storms and avalanches will cause no harm. Further, you have to ring the bell to announce the hours."

Ekkehard cast a doubtful look into the spacious cavern. It was a delicious feeling for him to know that there were human beings close at hand; but he could not make out whence they came.

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"Are your pasture-lands in the depths of the mountains?" asked he with a smile.

"He does not know where the Ebenalp is!" exclaimed the young girl compassionately. "I will show it you."

Her chip of pine-wood was still burning. She turned round to the back part of the cavern, the men following on her heels. So they went through a dark and narrow passage into the interior of the mountain; fragments of rock were lying across the path. Often they had to bend down their heads to be able to proceed. Faint, reddish gleams of light played on the projecting edges of the walls, and soon the flaring daylight appeared. The young girl struck her chip against the strangely formed stalactites which hung down from the roof, so that it went out. A few steps more, and they stood on a wide and delicious Alpine tract.

Innumerable flowers were exhaling their sweet fragrance. Veronicas, orchises, and lovely blue gentians grew there in great profusion; and the Apollo, the magnificent butterfly of the Alps, with its shining red eyes on its wings, was hovering over the luxuriant petals.

After the oppressive darkness and narrowness of the cavern, a magnificent and extensive panorama was doubly grateful to the eye.

The early morning mists were as yet lying in heavy and compact masses over the valley, look-

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ing like some mighty sea which in the very moment when its foam-crested billows were rising up had been changed into stone. With clear, sharp outlines the mountain-peaks stood out against the blue sky, like giant isles rising out of the sea of mists. The Bodensee, too, was covered up with vapory clouds, and the rows of the far-off Rhetian Mountains, with their craggy pinnacles, were just visible through the soft haze surrounding them. The melodious tinkling of the cow-bells was the only sound that broke the silence of that early morning hour. In Ekkehard's soul there rose a proud and yet humble prayer.

"You are going to stay with us," said the old herdsman. "I can tell so by the expression of your eyes."

"I am a homeless wanderer, whom the Abbot has not sent out hither," said Ekkehard sadly.

"That's all the same to us," replied the other. "If but we and the old Sentis over there are satisfied, then nobody else need be asked. The Abbot's sovereignty does not extend here. We pay him our tithes, when his stewards come here to look at our cottages, on the day when the milk is examined, because it is an old custom; but except that, we have an old proverb which says, 'His fields and grounds I do not till, nor do I bow before his will.'"

"Look there!" pointing out a gray mountain-

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peak, which in solitary grandeur rose from far-stretching ice-fields—"that is the lofty Sentis, the lord and master of the mountains. We take off our hats to him, but to nobody else. There to the right is the 'blue snow,' where in times long ago there were meadows and pasture-grounds enough; but a proud and overbearing man lived there, who was a giant, and whose pride increased with his flocks, so that he said: 'I will be king over all that my eyes survey.' But in the depths of the Sentis there arose a roaring and trembling; and the ground opened and sent forth floods of ice, which covered up the giant, his cottage, herds, and meadows; and from the eternal snow which lies there, cold chilling winds blow down to remind one that, besides the lord of the mountains, nobody is meant to reign here!"

The herdsman inspired Ekkehard with confidence. Independent strength, as well as a kindly heart, could be perceived in his words. His daughter, meanwhile, had gathered a nosegay of Alpine roses, which she held out to Ekkehard.

"What is thy name?" asked he.

"Benedicta."

"That is a good name," said Ekkehard, fastening the Alpine roses to his girdle. "Yes, I will remain with you."

Upon this the old man shook his right hand, so as to make him wince, and then, seizing the

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Alpine horn which hung suspended on a strap at his side, he blew a peculiar signal.

From all sides answering notes were heard, and soon the neighboring herdsmen all came over—strong, wild-looking men—and assembled round the old man, whom, on account of his good qualities, they had elected master of the Alps and inspector of the meadows on the Ebenalp.

“We have a new mountain brother,” said he. “I suppose that none of you will object?”

After this address they all lifted their hands in sign of approval, and then stepping up to Ekkehard, they bade him welcome; and his heart was touched, and he made the sign of the cross over them.

Thus Ekkehard became hermit of the Wildkirchlein, scarcely knowing how it had all come about. The master of the Ebenalp kept his word, and did his best to make him comfortable. The three goats were lodged in the side-cavern. Then he also showed him an intricate hidden path between the rocks which led down to the Seealpsee, which contained plenty of fine trout. Further, he put some new shingles into the gaps of the roof that wind and weather had caused in Gottschalk's blockhouse.

By degrees Ekkehard accustomed himself to the narrow confinement of his new domicile, and on the following Sunday he carried the wooden cross

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into the foreground of the cavern; he adorned it with a wreath of newly gathered flowers, and rang the bell which had hung at the entrance ever since Gottschalk's time, and which bore the mark of Sancho, the wicked bell-founder of St. Gall. When his herdsmen, with their families of boys and girls were all assembled, he preached them a sermon on the transfiguration, and told them how every one who ascended the mountain heights with the right spirit, in a certain sense of the word, became transfigured also.

"And though Moses and Elijah may not come down to us," he cried, "have we not the Sentis and the Kamor standing beside us? And they also are men of an old covenant, and it is good for us to be with them!"

His words were great and bold; and he himself wondered at them, for they were almost heretical, and he had never read such a simile in any of the church fathers before. But the herdsmen were satisfied, and the mountains also; and there was nobody to contradict him.

At noon Benedicta, the herdsman's daughter, came up. A silver chain adorned her Sunday bodice, which enclosed her bosom like a coat of mail. She brought a neat milking-pail made of ashwood, on which a cow was carved in simple outlines.

"This my father sends you," said she, "because

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you have preached so finely, and have spoken well of our mountains; and if anybody should try to harm you, you are to remember that the Ebenalp is near."

She threw a few handfuls of hazel-nuts into the pail. "I have gathered these for you," added she, "and if you like them I know where to find more."

Before Ekkehard could offer his thanks, she had disappeared in the subterranean passage.

"Dark brown are the hazel-nuts,
And brown like they am I,
And he who would my lover be
Must be the same as I!"

she sang archly, while going away.

A melancholy smile rose to Ekkehard's lips.

The tempest in his heart had not yet been quite appeased. Faint murmurs were yet reverberating within, like the thunderclaps of an Alpine storm, which are repeated by innumerable echoes from the mountains.

A huge, flat piece of rock had fallen down beside his cavern. Melting snow had undermined it in the spring. It resembled a gravestone, and he christened it inwardly the grave of his love. There he often sat. Sometimes he fancied the Duchess and himself lying under it, sleeping the calm sleep of the dead; and he sat down on it, and looked over the pine-clad mountains far away toward the

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Bodensee—dreaming. It was not well that he could see the lake from his cell, as the sight continually called up painful recollections. Often his heart would brim over with bitter, angry pain; often he would strain his eyes in the direction of the Untersee in the evening, and whisper soft messages to the passing winds. For whom were they meant?

His dreams at night were generally wild and confused. He would find himself in the castle chapel, and the everlasting lamp was rocking over the Duchess's head as it did then; but when he rushed toward her, she had the face of the woman of the wood, and grinned at him scoffingly. When he awoke from his uneasy slumbers in the early morning, his heart would often beat wildly, and the words of Dame Hadwig, "Oh, schoolmaster, why didst thou not become a warrior?" persecuted him, till the sun had risen high in the sky, or the appearance of *Benedicta* would banish them.

Often again he would throw himself down on the short, soft grass on the slope and ponder over the last months of his life. In the pure, keen Alpine air figures and events assumed clearer and more objective outlines before his inward eye, and he was tormented by the thought that he had behaved shyly and foolishly, and had not even succeeded in fulfilling his task by telling a story like *Praxedis* and *Master Spazzo*.

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"Ekkehard, thou hast made thyself ridiculous," muttered he to himself; and then he felt as if he must break his head against the rocks.

A melancholy mind broods long over a wrong it has undergone, quite forgetting that a blame-worthy action is only blotted out in the memory of others by better ones following.

Therefore, Ekkehard was as yet not ripe for the healing delights of solitude. The ever-present recollection of past suffering had a strange effect on him. Whenever he sat all alone in his silent cavern he fancied he heard voices that mockingly talked to him of foolish hopes and the deceits of this world. The flight and calls of the birds in the air seemed to him the shrieks of demons, and all his praying would avail nothing against these fantastic delusions.

When the terrors of the wilderness have once taken hold of a mind, eye and ear are easily deceived and apt to believe all the old legends and tales, which assert that the air, as well as water and earth, is inhabited by legions of immortal spirits.

It was a soft, fragrant midsummer night. Ekkehard was just about to lay himself down on his simple couch when the moonbeams fell right into the cavern. Two white clouds were sailing along the sky, one behind the other, and he overheard how they were talking together. One of them was Dame Hadwig, and the other Praxedis.

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"I should really like to see what the asylum of a wandering fool looks like," said the first white cloud, and swiftly hurrying down the steep rocky walls, she stood still on the Kamor, right opposite the cavern, and then floating down to the fir trees which grew in great numbers in the valley below, she cried out: "It is he! Go and seize the blasphemer."

Then the fir trees sprang into life and became monks, thousands and thousands, and chanting psalms and swinging rods in their hands, they began to climb up the rock toward the Wildkirchlein.

Trembling with terror, Ekkehard jumped up and seized his spear; but now it was as if a host of will-o'-the-wisps started out from the recesses of the cavern. "Away with you, out from the Alps!" cried they threateningly. All his pulses throbbed in the heat of fever, and so he ran away over the narrow path, along the frightful precipice, into the dark night, like a madman.

The second cloud was still standing beside the moon: "I can not help thee," said she with Praxedis's voice, "I do not know the way."

Downhill he ran as fast as his feet would carry him. Life had become a mere torture to him, and yet he caught hold of projecting parts of the rocks, and used his spear as a staff, not to fall down and thus get into the hands of the approaching spectres.

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The nightly descent from the Hohentwiel was mere child's play compared to this. Unconscious of all danger, he darted past peaks and chasms, and at last came down to level ground beside the lake. The goats often fell down there when they turned their eyes away from the grass, and gazed into the abysmal depth below.

At last he stood still beside the mysteriously beckoning, green Seealpsee, over which the silvery moonbeams danced and trembled. The rotten tree trunks, lying about on the shores, gave forth a spectral light. Ekkehard's eyes grew dim and filmy.

"Take me into thy arms," cried he, "for my heart is panting for rest."

He rushed into the cool, silent water, but his feet still touched ground, and the cooling waters of the mountain lake sent a delicious freshness through his feverish limbs. The water already reached to his breast, when he stopped and looked up, confused. The white clouds had disappeared, the moonbeams having dissolved them into transparent vapors. Magnificently, and yet sadly withal, the stars were glittering high over his head.

In bold, fantastic lines the Möglisalp stretched out its grass-covered horns toward the moon. On its left stood, calm and serious, the furrowed head of the Old Man, and to the right, towering above its double belt of glaciers, the stern, gray pyramid

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of the Sentis, surrounded by innumerable crags and pinnacles, looking like dark spectres of night.

Then Ekkehard knelt down on the pebbly bottom of the lake, so that the waters closed over his head, and rising again after a while, he stood there immovably with lifted arms, as if he were praying.

The moon now sank down behind the Sentis; a bluish light trembled over the old snow of the glaciers. A racking pain darted through Ekkehard's brain. The mountains around him began to rock and dance; a wailing sound streamed through the pine woods, and the lake rose and stirred, and its waves were alive with thousands and thousands of black tadpoles.

But in soft, dewy beauty, the figure of a woman rose from the waters, and floated up to the top of the Möglisalp. There she sat on the soft velvety grass, and shook the water from her long streaming tresses, and made herself a wreath of Alpine flowers.

In the depths of the mountains there arose a growling and trembling. The Sentis stretched himself out to his full height, and so did the Old Man to his right. Like gigantic Titans of old, they stormed at each other. The Sentis seized his rocks and threw them over, and the Old Man tore off his head and flung it at the pyramid of the Sentis. Now the Sentis stood on the right side, and the Old Man was flying before him to the left; but the

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lady of the lake looked on in smiling composure, and from her mountain-peak she mocked the stone combatants. And she shook her yellow curls, out of which there fell down a pearly waterfall; and it flowed down wilder and wilder, till it whirled the maiden with the liquid eyes back into the lake.

Upon this the uproar and strife ceased suddenly. The Old Man took up his head, put it on again, and singing a sad, mournful strain, he returned to his old place. And the Sentis likewise had resumed his post, and his glaciers were glittering calmly as before.

When Ekkehard awoke the next morning, he lay in his cavern, shaken with feverish cold. His knees felt as if they were broken.

The sun stood at his zenith, when Benedicta flitted past the cavern, and saw him lying there trembling, and wrapped in his wolf's skin mantle. His habit hung heavy and dripping over a piece of rock.

"When you again are going to fish for trout in the Seealpsee," said she, "you had better let me know, so that I can lead you. The goatherd who met you before sunrise told us that you staggered up the hill like a man walking in his sleep."

She went and rang the midday bell for him.

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CHAPTER XXIII

ON THE EBENALP

FOR six days Ekkehard was very ill. The herdsmen nursed him, and a decoction of blue gentian took away the fever. The Alpine air, too, helped toward his recovery. A great shock had been wanted to restore his bodily as well as mental equilibrium. Now he was convalescent, and neither heard voices nor saw phantoms. A delicious feeling of repose and recovering health ran through his veins. It was that state of indolent, pleasant weakness so beneficial to persons recovering from melancholia. His thoughts were serious, but had no longer any bitterness about them.

"I have learned something from the mountains," said he to himself. "Storming and raging will avail nothing, though the most enchanting of maidens were sitting before us; but we must become hard and stony outside like the Sentis, and put a cooling armor of ice round the heart; and sable night herself must scarcely know how it burns and glows within."

By degrees all the sufferings of the past months were shrouded and seen through a soft haze. He

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could think of the Duchess and all that had happened on the Hohentwiel without feeling a heart-ache. And such is the influence of lovely nature that it not only delights and softens the heart of the looker-on, but that it expands the mind in general, and conjures back days long gone by—the days of our early youth.

Ekkehard had never been in the habit of casting his retrospective glances very far back, but now he loved to fly there in his thoughts, as if it had been a paradise out of which the storm of life had driven him. He had spent several years in the cloister school at Lorsch on the Rhine. In those days he had no idea what heart-and-soul-consuming fire could be hidden in a woman's dark eyes. Then old parchments were his world.

One figure of that time had, however, been faithfully kept in his heart's memory; and that was Brother Conrad of Alzey. On him, who was his senior by but a few years, Ekkehard had lavished the affection of a first friendship. Their roads in life afterward diverged, and the days of Lorsch had been forced into the background by later events. But now they rose warm and glowing in his thoughts, like some dark hill on a plain, when the morning sun has cast his first rays on it.

It is with the human mind as with the crust of this old earth of ours. On the alluvia of childhood, new strata heap themselves up in stormy

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haste: rocks, ridges, and high mountains, which strive to reach up to heaven itself, and the ground on which they stand is forgotten and covered with ruins. But as the stern peaks of the Alps longingly look down into the valleys, and often, overwhelmed with homesickness, plunge down into the depths from which they rose, in the same way does memory love to go back to youth, and then digs for the treasures which were left carelessly behind.

So Ekkehard's thoughts now recurred often to his faithful companion. Once more he stood beside him, in the arched pillar-supported hall, and prayed with him beside the mausoleums of the old kings and the stone coffin of the blind Duke Thasilo. With him he walked through the shady lanes of the cloister garden, listening to his words; and all that Conrad had spoken then was good and noble, for he looked at the world with a poet's eye, and it was as if flowers must spring up on his way, and birds carol gaily, when his lips opened to utter words sweeter than honey.

"Look over yonder!" Conrad had once said to his young friend, when they were looking down over the land from the parapet of the garden. "There, where the mounds of white sand rise from the green fields, there was once the bed of the river Neckar. Thus do the traces of past generations run through the fields of their descendants, who should pay them some attention. Here, on the

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shores of the Rhine, we stand on hallowed ground, and it were time that we set to collecting its traditions before our appreciation of them is dulled by our contact with the commonplace, every-day world."

In the merry holiday-time Conrad and he had wandered through the Odenwald, where, in a valley hidden by green drooping birch trees, they had come to a well. Out of this they drank, and Conrad had said: "Bow down thy head, for this is the grove of the dead, and Hagen's beech tree and Siegfried's well. Here the best of heroes received his death-wound from the spear of the grim Hagen, which entered his back, so that the flowers around were bedewed with the red blood. Yonder, on the Sedelhof, Chriemhilde mourned for her slain husband, until the messengers of the Hunnic king came to demand the hand of the young widow." And he told him all about the princely castle at Worms, and the treasure of the Nibelungen, and the revenge of Chriemhilde, and Ekkehard listened with sparkling, eager eyes.

"Give me thy hand!" he cried, when all was over, to his young friend. "When we have become men, well versed in poetry, then we will erect a monument to the legends of the Rhine. My heart is even now brimful with the material for a mighty song of the prowess of heroes, perils, death, and vengeance, and I likewise know the art of the

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horny Siegfried, how he made himself invulnerable; for though there are no more any dragons to be slain in whose blood one could bathe, every one who breathes the mountain air with a pure heart, and bathes his brow in the morning dew, is gifted with the same knowledge. He can hear what the birds are singing in the trees, and what the winds tell of old legends, and he becomes strong and hearty; and if his heart is in the right place, he will write it down for the benefit of others."

Ekkehard had listened with an amazed, half fearful surprise at the other's dashing boldness, and had said at last: "My head is getting quite dizzy when I listen to thee, and how thou intendest to become another Homer."

And Conrad had smilingly replied: "Nobody will dare to chant another Iliad after Homer, but the song of the Nibelungen has not yet been sung, and my arm is young and my courage undaunted, and who knows what the course of time may bring?"

Another time they were walking together on the shores of the Rhine, and the sun, coming over the Wasgau Mountains, was mirrored in the waves, when Conrad said: "For thee I also know a song, which is simple and not too wild, so that it will suit thy disposition, which prefers the notes of a bugle to the roar of thunder. Look up! The

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towers of Worms shone and glistened in the sun—as they do to-day—when the hero Waltari of Aquitania came to Franconia, flying from Hunnic bondage. Here the ferryman rowed him over, with his sweetheart and his golden treasure. Through yonder dark, bluish-looking wood he then rode, and there was a fighting and tilting, a rattling and clashing of swords and spears, when the knights of Worms, who had gone in his pursuit, attacked him. But his love and a good conscience made Waltari strong, so that he held out against them all, even against King Gunther and the grim Hagen.”

Conrad then told him the whole legend with its details. “Around all large trees,” he concluded, “wild, young sprouts shoot up in abundance; and so round the trunk of the Nibelungen a whole thicket has sprung up, out of which he who has got the talent can build up something. Couldst thou not sing the Waltari?”

But Ekkehard preferred at that time to throw pebbles, making them skim the water, and he only took in half the meaning of that which his friend had said. He was a studious cloister pupil, and his thoughts were as yet contented with the tasks which fell to his daily share. Time separated the two friends, and Conrad had to fly from the cloister school, because he had once said that the logic of Aristotle was mere straw. So he had gone out into the wide world, nobody knew whither; and

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Ekkehard came to St. Gall, there pursuing his studies assiduously. He grew into a learned and sensible young man, deemed fit to become a professor; and he sometimes thought of Conrad of Alzey with feelings something akin to pity.

But a good seed-corn may lie hidden in a human heart for a long time, and yet at last germinate and bud, like the wheat from Egypt's buried mummies.

That Ekkehard now delighted in dwelling on these recollections was a proof that he had undergone a considerable change. And this was well. The caprices of the Duchess, and the unconscious grace of Praxedis, had refined his shy and awkward manners. The time of stirring excitement he had gone through during the invasion of the Huns had given a bolder flight to his aspirations, and had taught him to despise the paltry intrigues of petty ambition. Then his heart received a mortal wound, which had to be struggled with and overcome; and so the cloister scholar, in spite of cowl and tonsure, had arrived at a happy state of transition, in which the monk was about to become a poet, and went about like a snake with a new skin, which is only waiting a chance to rub off its shabby old coat against some hedge or tree.

Daily and hourly, when contemplating the ever-beautiful peaks of his mountains, and breathing the pure, fragrant Alpine air, it appeared a constant

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riddle to him how he could ever have thought to find happiness in poring over yellow parchment leaves, and how he then almost lost his reason on account of a proud woman. "Let all perish which has not strength to live," said he to himself, "and build up a new world for thyself; but build it inwardly, large, proud, and wide—and let the dead Past bury its dead!"

He was already walking about again quite cheerfully in his hermitage, when, one evening after he had rung the vesper-bell, the master of the Ebenalp came to him, carrying something carefully in a handkerchief. "God's blessing be with you, mountain brother," said he. "Well, you have had a good attack of the ague, and I came to bring you something as an after-cure. But I see that your cheeks are red and your eyes bright, so it has become unnecessary."

He opened his handkerchief, and displayed a lively ant-hill—old and young ants with a quantity of dry fir leaves. He shook the industrious little creatures down the hillside.

"If you had not been well you would have had to sleep on that to-night," said he with a laugh. "That takes away the last trace of fever!"

"The illness is gone," said Ekkehard. "Many thanks for the medicine!"

"You had better provide yourself against the cold, however," said the herdsman, "for a black

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cloud is hanging over the Brülltobel, and the toads are coming out of their holes; a sure sign that the weather is about to change."

Next morning all the peaks shone out in a dazzling white cover. A great deal of snow had fallen. Yet it was still much too early for the beginning of winter. The sun rose brightly, and tormented the snow with his rays, so as to make it almost repent having fallen.

When Ekkehard that evening was sitting before his pine-wood torch, he heard a thundering noise, as if the mountains were toppling over. He started, and put his hand up to his forehead, fearing that the fever was coming back.

This time, however, it was no fancy of a sick brain. A hollow echo boomed forth from the other side, rolling through the glens of the Sigelsalp and Maarwiese. Then there followed a sound like the breaking of mighty trees, a clattering fall, and all was silent again. Only, a low, plaintive hum could be heard all through the night, coming up from the valley.

Ekkehard did not sleep; yet, since his experiences on the Seealpsee, he did not quite trust the evidence of his senses. In the early morning he went up to the Ebenalp. Benedicta stood before their cottage door and greeted him with a snowball. The herdsman laughed when questioned about the nightly disturbance.

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"That music you will hear often enough," said he. "An avalanche has fallen down into the valley."

"And the humming?"

"That I suppose to have been your own snoring."

"But I did not sleep," said Ekkehard.

So they went down with him and listened. It was like a distant moaning coming up from the snow.

"If Pater Lucius of Quaradaves were still living," said Benedicta, "I should believe it to be him; as he had such a soft bear-like voice."

"Hush, thou wild bumblebee!" cried her father. Then they went to fetch shovels and Alpine sticks, the old man likewise taking his hatchet, and accompanied by Ekkehard, they followed the traces of the avalanche. It had fallen down from the Aesher, over earth and rock; breaking the low fir trees like straw. Three mighty tors, looking down into the valley like sentinels, stopped the fall. There the snow had angrily heaped itself up; only a small part had fallen over. The chief bulk, broken to pieces by the violence of the encounter, lay about in fantastic masses. The herdsman stooped down, to place his ear on the snow; then he advanced a few paces, and thrusting his mountain-stick in, he cried: "Here we must dig!"

And they shoveled up the snow for a considerable while, and dug a regular shaft, so that the snow walls rose high over their heads on both

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sides. They had often to breathe on their hands and rub them during their cold work. Suddenly the herdsman uttered a shout of delight, echoed by Ekkehard, for now a black spot had become visible. The old man ran to fetch a hatchet; a few shovelfuls more, and a shaggy object arose heavily, and, snorting and grunting, stretched out its forepaws, as if trying to shake off sleep; and finally it slowly mounted one of the tors, and sat down.

It was a huge she-bear buried alive with her spouse on a nocturnal fishing expedition to the Seealpsee. The latter, however, gave no sign of life. He had been stifled by her side, and lay there in the quiet sleep of death. Around his snout there was yet a half angry, half defiant expression, as if he had left this life with a curse on the early snow.

The herdsman wanted to attack the she-bear with his hatchet, but Ekkehard restrained him, saying: "Let her live! One will be enough for us!"

Then they drew the he-bear out, and together could hardly carry him. The she-bear sat on her rock, gazing down mournfully; and, uttering a plaintive growl, she cast a tearful look on Ekkehard, as if she had understood his interference in her behalf. Then she came down slowly, but not as if with hostile intentions. The men meanwhile had made a sling, with some twisted fir branches, in which to drag their booty along. They both

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stepped back, hatchet and spear in hand, but the bear widow bent down over her dead spouse, bit off his right ear and ate it up, as a memorial of the happy past. After this, she approached Ekkehard walking on her hind legs, who, being frightened at the prospect of a possible embrace, made the sign of the cross, and pronounced St. Gallus's conjuration against bears: "Go out and take thyself away from this our valley, thou monster of the wood. Mountains and Alpine glens be thy realm; but leave us in peace, as well as the herds on this pasture."

The she-bear had stopped, with a bitter, melancholy look in her eyes, as if she felt hurt at this disdain of her friendly feelings. She dropped down on her fore-legs, and turning her back on the man who had thus banished her, walked away on all fours. Twice she looked back, before entirely disappearing from their sight.

"Such a beast has the intelligence of a dozen men, and can read a person's will in his eyes," said the herdsman. "Else, I should think you a saint, whom the inhabitants of the wilderness obey."

Weighing the paws of the dead bear in his hand, he continued: "Hurrah! that will be a repast. These we will eat together next Sunday, with a dainty salad, made of mountain herbs. The meat will be ample provision for us through the winter, and for the skin we will cast lots."

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While they were dragging the victim of the avalanche up to the Wildkirchlein, Benedicta sang:

“And he who digs for snow-drops,
And whom fortune will befriend,
Will by chance dig a bear out,
And perhaps two in the end.”

Summer returned to the mountains with heart-stirring warmth, and a peaceful Sabbath quiet lay over the highlands. Ekkehard had regaled himself with the bear's paws at dinner in company with the herdsman and his daughter. It was a savory dish, coarse, but strengthening, and well suited for inhabitants of the mountains. Then he climbed to the top of the Ebenalp, and threw himself into the fragrant grass, from whence he looked up at the blue sky, enjoying his recovered health.

Benedicta's goats were grazing around him, and he could hear how the juicy Alpine grass was greedily munched between their sharp teeth. Restless clouds drifted across the hillsides; and on a piece of white limestone, with her face toward the Sentis, sat Benedicta. She was playing on a queer sort of a flute. It was a simple and melodious air, like a voice from the days of youth. With two wooden milk-spoons in her left hand she beat time. She was a proficient in this art, and her father would often say with regret: “'Tis really a pity!

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She deserved to be called Benedictus, as she would have made a capital herdsman."

When the rhythmical air came to an end, she gave a loud shout in the direction of the nearest slope, upon which the soft tones of an Alpine horn were heard. Her sweetheart, the herdsman on the Klus, stood under a dwarf fir tree, blowing from his long wooden instrument that strange, primitive music, unlike any other, which seems at first a mere humming sound, such as an imprisoned bumblebee, searching to escape, might produce, and that by and by rises and swells into that wondrous song of longing, love, and homesickness, creeping into the very heart's core, filling it either with rapturous joy or making it almost break with sorrow.

"I trust you are quite well again, mountain brother," cried Benedicta to Ekkehard, "as you are lying so comfortably on your back. Did you like the music?"

"Yes," said Ekkehard, "go on!"

He could scarcely gaze his fill of all the beauty around him. To the left, in silent grandeur, stood the Sentis, with its kindred. Ekkehard already knew them by their different names, and greeted them as he might dear neighbors. Before him, a confused mass of smaller hills and mountains, green, luxuriant meadow-lands, and dark pine woods lay extended. A part of the Rhine valley,

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bordered by the heights of the Arl Mountains and the distant Rhætian Alps, looked up at him. A vapory stripe of mist indicated the mirror of the Bodensee, which it covered; and all that he saw was expansive and grand and beautiful.

He who has felt the mysterious influence which reigns on airy mountain peaks, widening and ennobling the human heart, raising it heavenward in loftier thoughts, is filled with a sort of smiling pity when he thinks of those who, in the depths below, are dragging tiles and clay together, for the building of new towers of Babel; and he will join in that exalting mountain pæan which according to old herdsmen is equal to a *paternoster* before the Lord.

The sun was standing over the Kronberg, inclining toward the west, and deluging the heavens with a flood of golden light. He was likewise sending his rays into the mists over the lake, so that the white veil slowly dissolved, and in soft, delicate blue tints the Untersee became visible. Ekkehard strained his eyes, and beheld a dark filmy spot, which was the island of Reichenau, and a mountain which scarcely rose above the horizon; but he knew it well—it was the Hohentwiel.

The herdsman's tune accompanied the tinkling of the cow-bells, and over the scene spread a continually increasing warmth of color. The meadows were steeped in a golden brown green, and even

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the gray limestone walls of the Kamor were dyed with a faint roseate hue. Then Ekkehard's soul also glowed and brightened. His thoughts flew away over into the Hegau, and he fancied himself once more sitting with Dame Hadwig on the Hohenstoffeln, when they celebrated Cappan's wedding, and saw Audifax and Hadumoth, who appeared to him the very embodiment of earthly happiness, coming home from the Huns' camp. There arose also from the dust and rubbish of the past what the eloquent Conrad of Alzey had once told him of Waltari and Hildgunde. The joyous spirit of poetry entered his soul. He rose and jumped up into the air, in a way which must have pleased the Sentis. In the imagery of poetry, the poor heart could rejoice over that which life could never give it—the glory of knighthood, and the felicity of wedded love.

"I will sing the song of Waltari of Aquitania!" cried he to the setting sun, and it was as if he saw his friend Conrad of Alzey standing between the Sigelsalp and Maarwiese in robes of light, and nodding a smiling approval to this plan.

So Ekkehard cheerfully set to work. "What is done here, must either be well done, or not at all, else the mountains will laugh at us," the herdsman had once said, to which remark he had then nodded a hearty assent. The goatherd was sent into the valley to fetch some eggs and honey; Ekkehard

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begged his master to give him a holiday, and entrusted him with a letter to his nephew. He wrote it in the cipher well known at the monastery, but without meaning to any other person. The contents of the letter were as follows:

"All hail and blessings to the cloister pupil Burkhard!

"Thou, who hast been an eye-witness of thy uncle's sorrow, wilt know how to be silent. Do not try to find out where he is now, but remember that God is everywhere. Thou hast read in Procopius how Gelimer, the king of the Vandals, when he was a prisoner in the Numidian hills, and when his misery was great, entreated his enemies to give him a harp, so that he might give voice to his grief. Thy mother's brother now begs thee to give to the bearer of this one of your small harps, as well as some sheets of parchment, colors, and pens, for my heart in its loneliness feels inclined to sing a song. Burn this letter. God's benediction be upon thee! Farewell!"

"Thou must be wary and cautious, as if thou wert going to take the young ones out of an eagle's nest," Ekkehard said to the boy. "Ask for the cloister pupil who was with Romeias the watchman when the Huns came. To him thou art to give the letter. Nobody else need know about it."

The goatherd, putting his forefinger to his lips, replied with a knowing look: "With us no tales

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are repeated. The mountain air teaches one to keep secrets."

Two days afterward he returned from his expedition, and unpacked the contents of his wicker basket before Ekkehard's cavern. A small harp, with ten strings, three-cornered in imitation of the Greek delta, colors and writing material, and a quantity of clean, soft parchment-leaves with ruled lines lay all carefully hidden under a mass of green oak leaves.

The goat-boy, however, looked sullen and gloomy.

"Thou hast done thy business well," said Ekkehard.

"Another time, I won't go down there," grumbled the boy, clenching his fist.

"Why not?"

"Because it is no place for such as I. In the hall, I inquired for the pupil, and gave him the letter. After that I felt rather curious to see what nice young saints those might be who went to school there, with their monk's habits. So I went to the garden where the young gentlemen were playing with dice and drinking, as it was a recreation day. I looked on at their throwing stones at a mark, and playing a game with sticks, and I could not help laughing, because it was all so weak and miserable. And when they asked me what I was laughing at, I took up a stone, and threw it

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twenty paces further than the best of them, and cried out: 'What a set of ninnies you are!' Upon this, they tried to get at me with their sticks; but I seized the one next to me, and sent him flying through the air, so that he dropped into the grass like a wounded mountain rook; and then they all cried out that I was a coarse country lout, and that their strength lay in learning and intellect. Then I wanted to know what intellect was, and they said: 'Drink some wine, and afterward we will write it on thy back!' And the cloister wine being good, I drank a few jugfuls, and they wrote something on my back. I do not remember how it was all done, for the next morning I had a very bad headache, and did not know any more about their intellect than before."

Removing his rough linen shirt, he showed his back to Ekkehard, on which the Latin inscription was written in large letters with black axle grease:

"Of my countrymen I'm no specimen poor,
I, an ignorant, stupid, heathen boor."

This was a monastic joke. Ekkehard could not restrain a laugh. "Don't mind it," said he, "and remember that it is thy own fault, as thou satst too long over thy wine."

But the boy was not to be appeased so easily.

"My black goats are far dearer to me than all those young gentlemen together," said he, while

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buttoning his shirt again. "But if ever I catch one of the milksops on the Ebenalp, I will write something on his back with unburnt ashes that he will not forget as long as he lives; and if he is not satisfied with that, he may roll down a precipice, like an avalanche in spring."

Still grumbling, the boy went away.

Ekkehard then took up the harp, and sitting down at the foot of the crucifix before his cavern he played a joyous air. It was a long time since he had last touched the chords, and it was an unspeakable delight for him, in that vast solitude, to give vent in low tuneful melodies to the thoughts and feelings that were oppressing his heart. And the fair lady, *Music*, was *Poetry's* powerful ally; and the epic song of Waltari, which at first had approached him only in misty outlines, condensed itself into clearly defined figures, which again grouped themselves into glowing pictures, warm with life. Ekkehard closed his eyes to see them still better, and then he beheld the Huns approaching, a race of nimble, merry horsemen, with less repulsive faces than those against whom he had himself fought but a few months ago; and they carried off the royal offspring from Franconia and Aquitania, as hostages, Waltari and the fair Hildgunde, the joy of Burgundy. And as he struck the chords with greater force, he also beheld King Attila himself, who was of tolerably handsome

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mien, and well inclined to gaiety and the pleasures of the cup. And the royal children grew up at the Hunnic court, and when they were grown up a feeling of homesickness came over them, and they remembered how they had been betrothed to each other from the days of their childhood.

Then there arose a sounding and tuning of instruments, for the Huns were holding a great banquet; King Attila quaffed from the mighty drinking-cup, and the others followed his example until they all slept the heavy sleep of drunkenness. Now he saw how the youthful hero of Aquitania saddled his war-horse in a moonlit night, and Hildgunde came and brought the Hunnic treasure. Then he lifted her up into the saddle, and away they rode out of Hunnic thralldom.

In the background, in fainter outlines, there still floated pictures of danger and flight, and dreadful battles with the grasping King Gunther.

In large bold outlines, the whole story which he intended to glorify in a simple, heroic poem, stood out before his inward eye.

That very same night Ekkehard remained sitting up with his candle, and began his work; and a sensation of intense pleasure came over him as the figures sprang into life under his hand. It was a great and honest joy; for in the exercise of the poetic art mortal man emulates the activity of the Creator, who caused a world to spring forth out

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of nothing. The next day found him eagerly busying himself with the first set of adventures. He could scarcely account for the laws by which he regulated and interwove the threads of his poem, and in truth it is not always necessary to know the why and the wherefore of everything. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit," says St. John.

And if now and then a feeling of doubt and distrust of his own ability came over him—for he was timidly constituted, and sometimes thought that it was scarcely possible to attain anything without the help of books, and learned models—then he would walk up and down the narrow path before his cavern, and, riveting his looks on the gigantic walls of his mountains, would derive comfort and serenity from them; and finally he said to himself: "Of all that I write and conceive, I will merely ask the Sentis and the Kamor whether they are satisfied." And with these thoughts, he was on a good track; for the poetry of him who receives his inspiration from old mother nature will be genuine and truthful, although the linen-weavers, stone-cutters, or the whole of that most respectable brotherhood of straw-splitters down below, may ten thousand times declare it to be a mere fantastical chimera.

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He thus spent several days in industrious work. The form in which he clothed his legend was Latin verse, of the Virgilian style, because the pathos of the German mother-tongue struck him as being still too rough and uneven for the fair measured pace of his epic. Thus his solitude became daily more peopled. At first, he thought he would continue his work night and day, without any interruption; but the physical part of our nature will claim its rights. Therefore he said: "He who works must attune his daily labor to the course of the sun;" and when the shadows of evening fell on the neighboring heights, he made a pause, seized his harp and with it ascended the Ebenalp. The spot where the first idea of writing the epic had entered his mind had become very dear to him.

Benedicta welcomed him joyfully when he came for the first time with his harp.

"I understand you, mountain brother," said she. "Because you are not allowed to have a sweetheart, you have taken to a harp to which you tell everything that's going on in your heart. But it shall not be in vain that you have become a musician."

Raising her hand to her mouth, she uttered a clear, melodious whistle toward the low-thatched cottage on the Klus, which soon brought over the herdsman her sweetheart, with his Alpine horn.

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He was a strong and fine-looking lad. In his right ear he wore a heavy silver ring, representing a serpent, suspended from which, on a tiny silver chain, hung the milkspoon, the herdsman's badge of honor. His waist was encircled by the usual broad belt, in the front of which some monstrous animal, faintly resembling a cow, was to be seen. With shy curiosity depicted in his healthy face, he stood before Ekkehard.

But Benedicta said:

"Please to strike up a dance now; for often enough we have regretted that we could not do it ourselves; but when he blows his horn he can not whirl me round at the same time, and when I play on the flute, I can not spare an arm."

Ekkehard willingly struck up the desired tune, being much pleased at the innocent merriment of these children of the mountains; and so they danced on the soft Alpine grass, until the moon rose in golden beauty over the Maarwiese. Greeting her with many a shout of delight, they still continued their dance, alternately singing at the same time some simple little couplets—

"And the glaciers grew upward
Until nigh to the top,
What a pity for the maiden
If they'd frozen her up!"

sang Benedicta's lover, gaily whirling her round;

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“And the storm blew so fiercely,
And it blew night and day,
What a pity for the cowherd
If it had blown him away!”

she replied in the same measure.

When at last, tired with dancing, they rested themselves beside the young poet, Benedicta said: “Some day you will also get your reward, you dear, kind music-maker! There is an old legend belonging to these mountains, that once in every hundred years a wondrous blue flower blooms on the rocky slopes, and to him who finds the flower the mountains open, and he can go in and take as much of the treasures of the deep as his heart desires, and fill his hat to the brim with glittering jewels. If ever I find the flower I will bring it to you, and you’ll become a very, very rich man; for,” added she, clasping the neck of her lover with both arms, “I should not know what to do with it, as I have found my treasure already.”

But Ekkehard replied, “Neither should I know what to do with it!”

He was right. He who has been initiated into art has found the genuine blue flower. Where others see nothing but a mass of rocks and stones, the vast realm of the beautiful opens to him; and there he finds treasures which are not eaten up by rust, and he is richer than all the money-changers

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and dealers and purse-proud men of the world, although in his pocket the penny may sometimes hold a sad wedding-feast with the farthing.

"But what then are we to do with the blue flower?" asked Benedicta.

"Give it to the goats or to the big bull-calf," said her lover, laughingly. "They also deserve a treat now and then."

And again they whirled each other around in national dances, until Benedicta's father came up to them. The latter had nailed the bear's skull, which had since been bleached by the sun, over the door of his cottage, after the day's labors were done. He had stuck a piece of stalactite between the jaws, so that the goats and cows timidly ran away, scared by the new ornament.

"You make noise and fuss enough to make the Sentis tremble and quake," cried the old man. "What on earth are you doing up there?" Thus good-naturedly scolding them, he made them go into the cottage.

The Waltari song meanwhile proceeded steadily; for when the heart is brimful of ideas and sounds, the hand must hurry to keep pace with the flight of thought.

One day at noon, Ekkehard had just begun taking his usual walk on the narrow path before his cavern, when a strange visitor met his view. It was the she-bear that he had dug out of the snow.

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Slowly she climbed up the steep ascent, carrying something in her mouth. He ran back to his cave to fetch his spear, but the bear did not come as an enemy. Pausing respectfully at the entrance of his domicile, she dropped a fat marmot, which she had caught basking in the sunny grass on a projecting stone. Was it meant as a present to thank him for having saved her life, or was she prompted by other feelings—who knows? To be sure, Ekkehard helped to consume the mortal remains of her spouse; could some of the widow's affection thus be transferred to him? We know too little about the law of affinities to decide this question.

The bear now sat down timidly before the cavern, steadily gazing in. Then Ekkehard was touched, and pushed a wooden plate with some honey toward her, though still keeping his spear in his hand. But she only shook her head mournfully. The look out of her small, lidless eyes was melancholy and beseeching. Ekkehard then took down his harp from the wall, and began to play the strain which Benedicta had asked for. This evidently had a soothing effect on the deserted bear-widow's mind; for raising herself on her hind-legs, she walked up and down with rhythmical grace; but when Ekkehard played faster and wilder, she bashfully cast down her eyes, as her thirty-year-old bear's conscience did not sanction her dancing. Then she stretched herself out again

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before the cavern, as if she wanted to deserve the encomium which the author of the hymn in praise of St. Gallus bestowed on the bears when he called them "animals possessing an admirable degree of modesty."

"We two suit each other well," said Ekkehard. "Thou hast lost what thou hast loved best in the snow, and I in the tempest; I will play something more for thee."

He now chose a melancholy air which seemed to please her well, as she gave an approving growl now and then. But Ekkehard, ever inwardly busy with his epic, at last said: "I have thought for a long while what name I should give to the Hunnic queen under whose care the young Hildgunde was placed; and now I have found one. Her name shall be *Ospirin*, the godlike she-bear. Dost thou understand me?"

The bear looked at him, as if it were all the same to her; so Ekkehard drew forth his manuscript and noted down the name. The wish to make known the creation of his mind to some living being had for a long while been strong within him. Here, in the vast solitude of the mountains, he thought that the bear might take the place which under other circumstances would have required some learned scholar. So he stepped into his blockhouse, and, leaning on his spear, he read out the beginning of his poem; he read with a

Ekkehard

loud, enthusiastic voice, and the bear listened with laudable patience.

So he read further and further: how the knights of Worms, who persecuted Waltari, entered the Wasgau Forest, and fought with him—and still she listened patiently; but when at last the single combat went on without end, when Ekkefried of Saxony fell down in the grass a slain man beside the bodies of his predecessors, and Hadwart and Patavid, the nephews of Hagen, likewise shared the lot of their companions—then the bear raised herself slowly, as if even she had grown tired of so much bloodshed, and with stately steps strode down the valley.

In a solitary, rocky crag on the Sigelsalp opposite was her domicile. Thither she directed her steps, to prepare for the coming long sleep of winter.

The epic, however, which of all living beings the she-bear of the Sigelsalp was the first to hear, the writer of this book has rendered from Latin into German verse during the long winter evenings; and though many a worthy translator had undertaken this task before him, he yet did not like to withhold it from the reader, in order that he may see that in the tenth century, as well as in later ages, the spirit of poetry had set up her abode in the minds of chosen men.

Ekkehard

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SONG OF WALTARI

WHEN Attila was king amongst the Huns—
Whose fame had sounded over lands and seas,
Whose valiant hordes had conquer'd many kings,
Destroying all who ventured to resist,
And granting peace to those who bent their necks
Low in the dust, before his mighty sword,
And paying heavy ransom thus were spar'd—
One day the bugle sounded far and wide,
Announcing that another war was near,
Calling the men to arms, and then to horse,
To go where'er their leader should decree.
And Attila, when all had been prepar'd,
Spoke thus unto his men, who breathless stood
To hear what their king would have to say.
“Wearied of this long peace, I have resolv'd,
That though unask'd, and like enough to be
Unwelcome too, we yet will tarry not,
But pay a visit to the town of Worms,
Franconia's proud and noble capital.”
Scarce had he ended, when a roaring shout
Broke on the silence like a cataract,
Loud rose and wild their joyous, swelling cry,
“Long live the king! long live King Attila.”
Gay were the festivals then held at Worms,

Ekkehard

Where Gibich sat in his ancestral halls,
To celebrate the birth of his first son,
The heir which Heaven had denied him long.
But suddenly a pallor, icy cold,
Spread o'er his features, turning them to stone,
As if Medusa's head he had beheld;
For in that evil moment he had heard
That from the Danube came a dreadful host
Of enemies, who soon would flood his land
In numbers countless as the stars of heaven
And swifter than the scorching desert winds.
In frighten'd haste a council then was held,
In which the wisest men the land possess'd
Were to decide what it were best to do.
And in this danger one and all agreed
That, as resistance were mere idle boast,
'Twere better not to irritate their foes,
But offer tribute and give hostages;
And rather give the something which they ask'd
Than lose their all—land, fortunes, with their lives.
But as King Gibich's son, Gunther by name,
Was but a suckling yet, as hostage he
Could not be sent—Sir Hagen in his place,
Gibich's own cousin, was selected then,
A young and stalwart knight, whose pedigree
Prov'd his descent from noble Trojan blood.
So he was sent with ample bags of gold
To make the peace with Attila the Hun.
In those same days there reign'd in Burgundy,

Ekkehard

King Herrich with a strong and mighty hand;
Whose only child, the gentle Hildëgund,
Was fairer far and lovelier to behold
Than any other maid in all the land
Whose future queen she one day was to be.
But when Franconia had obtain'd the peace,
The Huns with all their concentrated force
Approach'd the frontiers now of Burgundy;
And at their head, tow'ring above the rest,
There rode the king, the dreaded Attila.
Behind him, pressing forward eagerly,
A body-guard of noble Hunnic chiefs.
The earth reechoed with their horses' tramp,
The clashing of their swords frighten'd the air,
And in the fields an iron wood of spears
Shone out with reddish light, like dewy meads,
On which the sun is casting his first rays.
And thus they scal'd the mountains, cross'd the streams,
For nothing could impede their reckless speed.
Already they had pass'd the river Rhone,
And now came pouring in a surging sea
Of men and riders, fearful to behold.
At Châlons sat King Herrich, fearing nought,
When from the belfry rose the watchman's cry:
"I see a cloud of dust, foreboding ill—
Our enemies have come, and so beware,
And shut your houses ere it be too late."
The tale of how Franconia had escap'd,
By paying tribute, had reach'd Herrich's ear,

Ekkehard

Who now address'd his vassals in this way :
"Well do we know that brave and valiant men
Franconia holds—and yet they did not dare
Resist the Huns, but made a treaty with
King Attila, and so I do not see,
Why we, like fools, should risk to lose our lives.
One cherish'd daughter do I but possess—
Yet for my country's weal I'll offer her
As hostage to the Huns, to guard the peace."
Bare-headed and unarmed his messengers
Then went to meet the Huns, and sans delay,
Into the presence of King Attila
They soon were brought, who did receive them well,
As was his wont, to dissipate their fears,
And then with gracious mien address'd them thus :
"Indeed, believe me, I myself prefer
A friendly treaty far to bloody war ;
I am a man of peace, and only fight
Against the wanton fools who dare to doubt
The power which I hold from Heaven's self :
Therefore your Master's offer I accept."
This message then was brought unto the king,
Who now went out himself, accompanied
By a long train of heavy-laden men,
Bearing the gold and jewels manifold,
Which as a tribute to the Huns he paid.
And by the hand, fair as the morning star,
He led his only daughter, Hildègund.
The peace was sign'd—farewell, sweet Hildègund,

Ekkehard

The pearl of Burgundy, its hope and joy.
Full of content at this new treaty made,
King Attila now led his warriors brave
On to the west, to Aquitania,
Where Alpher sway'd the sceptre, strong and brave.
An only son, Waltari, was his pride,
Who, yet a boy, promis'd one day to be
All that a father's heart could wish to see.
Herrich and Alpher, old and faithful friends,
With many a solemn oath on either side,
Had long decreed that when the time should come
Their children's hands in wedlock should be join'd.
Sadly King Alpher brooded in his halls
On that which it behoov'd him now to do.
"Alack!" he cried, "that in my hoary days
I can not find my death by lance or sword;
But now that Burgundy has deign'd to crave
A shameful peace, such as Franconia's king
First did conclude—what now is left to me
But do the same?—despatch my messengers
And offer bribes of gold—and, worse than all,
My only son as hostage to the foe!"
Thus spoke King Alpher, and so was it done.
Laden with gold the Huns return'd home
With Hagen, Hildègund and Alpher's son;
They gladly greeted their Pannonian home,
And here our captives led no evil life,
For Attila was not a cruel man
By nature; so he had them treated well,

Ekkehard

Almost as if they'd been his flesh and blood.
The maiden Hildgund', to his wife the queen,
Ospirin was her name, entrusted was,
Whilst the two princes he himself took care
To see well taught in all the warlike arts,
Neglecting nothing fitted for their rank.
And so they grew in years and wisdom too,
Outstripping all in strength and witty speech,
For which the king did love them both alike,
And placed them high above the noble Huns.
The German maiden, too, soon won the heart
Of Ospirin, the proud and haughty queen.
The soft and winning ways of fair Hildgund'
Did gain her confidence, until at last
She made her keeper of the treasure-room.
Next to the queen she was in honor held;
Her slightest wish scarce uttered was obey'd.
Meanwhile King Gibich fell a prey to death,
So that his throne was now by Gunther held,
Who broke the treaty made with Attila,
And offer'd scoff and taunts instead of gold
Unto the messengers that he had sent.
As soon as Hagen heard this welcome news
He fled by night, and safely reach'd the court
Of Gunther, who receiv'd him full of joy.
Great was the sorrow in the morning, when
King Attila first heard of Hagen's flight;
And with a cunning mien the queen spoke thus:
"Oh Lord and spouse, I warn thee to beware,

Ekkehard

Lest Walter too, thy pillar of support,
Try to escape, like to his faithless friend.
Therefore I pray thee, follow my advice,
And to Waltari say with friendly speech:
'In many battles thou hast prov'd thy arm
Strong and untiring in thy master's cause.
Therefore I fain would give thee now some sign
Of my approving love and gratitude.
Of all the noble Hunnic maidens here
I bid thee choose the best to be thy wife,
And what of goods and lands thou wilt demand
It shall be granted ere you say the word.'"
These words well pleas'd the king, and show'd him how
A woman's cunning often hits the mark
Which has escap'd the prudent eye of man.
And so he bade Waltari come to him,
And told him all the queen had said before.
But though his words he temptingly set forth,
Waltari guessing all that lay beneath,
And having long before form'd other plans,
With subtle speech his fears tried to dispel.
"Oh prince, all I have done is quickly told,
And scarce deserves the kindly praise you deign
To lavish on my poor, though faithful deeds.
But if I were to follow your command,
And take a wife, my time would be engross'd
By other cares and duties manifold;
Which all would serve to make me turn away,
And leave the path of honor by your side.

Ekkehard

For when you love a wife, you dislike war,
Which is to tear you from her loving arms.
And so my gracious lord I do beseech
Not thus to banish me from his dear side.
And never, when you order me to fight
By night or day, my sword you'll idle find;
And in the midst of battle ne'er my eyes
Shall be found looking backward, toward the spot
Where wife and children I did leave behind—
A thought to lame my arm and dim my eye.
Therefore, by your own valor and my own,
I beg you not to force this yoke on me.”
Then Attila was touch'd, and in his soul
He thought, “Waltari never thinks of flight!”
Meanwhile rebellion dared to raise her head
In distant lands, amongst another tribe,
Against whose province war was now proclaim'd,
And young Waltari then was namèd chief
Of all the army; and it was not long
Before a battle wagèd long and fierce.
Full valiantly they fought, the Hunnic hordes,
Filling the air with their redundant cries,
To which the trumpets join'd their piercing voice.
Like glaring sheets of lightning flew the spears,
Splitting the shields and helmets of the foe;
And as the pelting hailstones in a storm,
So fell the arrows, swift and merciless.
And wilder still, and fiercer grew the fight,

Ekkehard

Until they drew the sword, and man to man they fought.
Then many a rider lay with fractur'd skull
Beside his horse, fell'd by the selfsame sword.
And in the foremost ranks Waltari fought,
As if King Death himself with nimble scythe
Were mowing down his harvest—thus he stood,
Filling with awe the hearts of all around,
And causing a wild flight where'er he turn'd,
So that the bloody victory was won,
And great the booty which they made that day.
Giving the signal then to rest themselves
Now from their armèd dance, Waltari plac'd
A wreath of verdant oak leaves on his head,
And all his men who saw it did the same.
And thus triumphantly they did return,
Each to his sep'rate home with gladsome heart.
And to Attila's palace Walter went,
Riding but slowly, like a weary man.
But when the servants saw him thus approach,
With eager, curious looks they hurried forth;
And seizing his good palfrey by the reins,
They bade him welcome; offering their help
To rest him after all his past fatigues,
And putting questions to him 'bout the war,
And if their arms were crown'd with victory.
But scanty answers to these quests he made;
Then entering the hall he found Hildgund',
Who blushing receiv'd his proffer'd kiss,

Ekkehard

Then hurried off to fetch a cup of wine,
To still his thirst after so much fatigue.
Long was the draught he took, for as the earth
Gladly absorbs the rain after long drought,
So did the wine refresh his parchèd tongue.
Then clasping the fair maiden's hand in his,
For both knew well that they were long betroth'd,
He thus spoke out before the blushing maid:
"Many a year has softly glided by,
Whilst in captivity we long'd for home;
For though the cage that holds us be of gold,
'Tis still a cage, and ne'er can I forget
The ancient promise which made thee my bride
In times of freedom, ere the Huns had come."
These words, like fiery arrows, found their way
Into the ears of Hildgund', who to try
The faith and truthfulness of him who spoke,
With tearful voice and flashing eye replied:
"How darest thou dissemble thy true thoughts,
For ne'er thy heart did feel what says thy mouth,
For thy proud heart is set on nobler game
Than the poor maiden whom thou mockest now."
With steady eyes, that gaz'd a half reproach,
The valiant hero thus his speech resum'd:
"Far be deceit and falsehood from my lips,
Which never yet have utter'd one false word;
And verily thou know'st I love thee well—
And if I in thy woman's soul could read,
I fain would tell thee something secretly

Ekkehard

Whilst not a spying ear is list'ning near."
Fully convinc'd of having wrong'd her knight,
Hildgunde, weeping, fell upon her knees:
"Go where thou wilt, and I will follow thee,
Through grief and dangers until Death us part."
With gentle words and loving arms he rais'd
The weeping maiden; saying all he knew
To comfort her, and then reveal'd his plans:
"My soul has long been weary of this yoke,
And fill'd with yearning for my fatherland;
Yet never would I go without Hildgund',
My own beloved future wife and queen."
And smiling through her tears, Hildgund' replied:
"My lord, the words thou speakest I have borne
For many years a secret in my heart.
So let us fly then when and how thou wilt,
And our love will help us to surmount
All dangers that may rise in our path."
Then further Walter whisper'd in her ear:
"And as they have entrusted thee with all
The keys unto their treasures, I would have
Thee lay aside the armor of the king,
His helmet and his sword, a masterpiece
Of foreign workmanship. Then go and fill
Two chests with gold and jewels to the brim,
So that thou scarce canst lift them off the ground.
Besides four pair of well-made leathern shoes—
The way is long—as many take for thee.
And from the blacksmith fetch some fishing hooks,

Ekkehard

So that the lakes and rivers which we pass
May yield us fish for our support and cheer.
All this a week from this let be prepared,
For then the king will hold a sumptuous feast,
And when the wine has sent them all to sleep,
We two will fly away to the far west!"

The hour for the feast had come at last,
And in the hall, bedeck'd with colors gay,
Attila on his throne, in purple clad,
Presided o'er the feast; whilst round about,
On couches numberless, the others lay.
The tables scarce could bear the heavy load
Of all the dishes, pleasant to behold;
Whilst from the golden beakers issued forth
Enticing, fragrant scents of costly wines.
The meal had now begun. With zealous grace
Waltari on himself the duty took
To act as host, encouraging the guests
To do full honor to the goodly cheer.
And when at last their appetites were sooth'd,
And all the tables from the hall remov'd,
Waltari to the king these words address'd:
"And now, my noble lord and king, I beg
To give your gracious leave without delay,
That the carousing to the meal succeed."
Then dropping on his knees, a mighty cup,
Richly adorn'd with many a picture rare,
He thus presented to the king, who said:
"Indeed, my good cup-bearer, you mean well,

Ekkehard

By thus affording me the ample means
To drown my thirst in this great flood of wine!"
Then laughingly he rais'd it to his lips,
And drank and drank until the giant cup
Was emptied to the dregs, and fairly stood
The nail-test, as no single drop would flow
When upside down the beaker then was turn'd.
"Now follow my example, all of you!"
The old carouser cried with cheerful voice.
And swifter almost than the chased deer
The cup-bearers now hurried through the hall,
Filling the cups as soon as they were quaff'd,
Each trying in this tournament of wine
To get the better of his neighbors there.
Thus in short space of time many a tongue,
That often utter'd wise and prudent speech,
Began to stammer—until by degrees
The wine did conquer e'en the strongest men;
So that when midnight came it found them all
A prey to drunken and besotted sleep.
With soft and careful voice Waltari now
Call'd to Hildgund', and bidding her prepare,
Went to the stable then to fetch his horse,
Lion by name, his good and trusty steed,
That stood awaiting him, pawing the ground,
And with dilating nostrils bit the reins
As if impatient to display his strength.
Then on each side the treasure-laden chests
Were fasten'd carefully; some victuals too

Ekkehard

Packed in a basket had not been forgot.
First lifting up the maiden, in whose hands
The reins he plac'd, Waltari follow'd her,
His red-plum'd helmet towering above
His massive armor, whose protective strength
Had stood the test of many fierce attacks.
On either side he wore a trusty sword,
Beside a Hunnic sabre, short but sharp;
And in his hands both shield and lance he held.
Thus well prepar'd 'gainst any chance attack,
Waltari and his bride rode from the halls
Of Attila forever—full of joy
All through the long and darksome night they rode,
The maiden taking care to guide the steed
And watch the treasure, holding in her hand
The fishing-rod, as her companion had
Enough to do to carry all his arms.
But when the morning sun cast his first rays
Upon the slumb'ring earth they left the track
Of the broad highway, turning to the shade
Of lonely woods, and if the wish for flight
Had not been stronger in the maiden's heart
Than fear, she fain would have shrunk back
Before the dangers which seem'd lurking there
Behind each tree; and when a branch but mov'd,
Or when some hidden bird its voice did raise,
Her bosom heav'd with half-suppressèd sighs.
But on they rode, having to find their way
Through pathless woods and lonely mountain glens. . . .

Ekkehard

Yet still they slept in that vast banquet hall,
Until the sun stood high up in the sky,
When Attila, the king, first did awake,
And rais'd his heavy head, clouded with wine,
Then slowly rose, and stepping to the door,
Call'd out with drowsy voice: "Ye men out there,
Go find Waltari, quick, and bring him here,
That he may cheer his king with sprightly talk,
Presenting him the welcome morning-cup."
The servants, to obey his order, went
In all directions, looking here and there,
Yet nowhere was Waltari to be found.
With trembling gait Dame Ospirin now came,
And from afar was heard her scolding voice,
"What in the name of wonder ails Hildgund',
That she forgets to bring my morning-gown?"
Then there arose a whisper 'mongst the men,
And soon the queen had guess'd the fatal truth,
That both their captives now had taken flight.
Loud was her grief, with which she now exclaim'd,
"Oh cursèd be the banquet, curs'd the wine
Which so much mischief in one night has wrought!
And yet I, who foresaw the coming doom,
Unheeded rais'd my warning voice in vain.
So now the strongest pillar of support
That propp'd the throne, Waltari, too is gone."
Fierce was the anger which beset the heart
Of Attila, who, tearing his gray locks
In his impotent rage, could find no words

Ekkehard

In which to utter all that rag'd within.
During that day he neither ate nor drank,
In gloomy silence brooding o'er his loss;
Even at night his mind could find no rest,
For stubborn sleep refus'd to close his eyes.
So, tossing restlessly about, he lay
As if his blood were chang'd to liquid fire;
Then madly starting up, he left his couch,
And pacing his dark chamber up and down,
His frantic grief in all his acts display'd.
But while in fruitless sorrow thus the night
Crept by with stealthy, slowly measured tread,
Waltari with his lady-love rode on
In breathless silence through the Hunnic lands.
But when the rising dawn announc'd the day,
King Attila did call the eldest Huns,
Whose hoary heads were signs of ripen'd wit,
Around his throne, and then address'd them thus:
"He that shall bring Waltari back to me,
That cunning fox who has deserted us,
Him I will clothe, in costly golden robes,
And cover him with gifts from head to foot,
So that his very feet shall tread on gold."
'Twas said in vain, for neither count nor knight
Nor page nor slave was found in all the land
Who had the courage to pursue a man
Renowned for his valor and his strength,
Who never yet had found his match and peer,
Whose sword was ever crown'd with victory.

Ekkehard

Thus all the king could say was said in vain,
And unavailing were both gold and speech.
Thus unpursued the lovers onward sped,
Trav'ling by night and resting in the day
In shady nooks and shelter'd mountain glens,
Spending their time in catching birds and fish,
To still their hunger and to drive away
All idle fancies from their hearts and heads,
So that in all this time the noble knight
Not once the maiden wanted to embrace.
Full fourteen times the sun had pass'd his round
Since they had left the halls of Attila,
When in the ev'ning light, between the trees,
They saw a sheet of water, flashing bright
And golden in the sunshine—and at last
They gave a joyous welcome to the Rhine,
The noble river from whose vine-clad banks
The stately battlements and lofty towers
Of ancient Worms, Franconia's capital,
Rose proudly in the air. A ferryman,
Who then was loitering beside his boat,
Row'd them across, and as a fee receiv'd
Some fish which in the Danube had been caught
On that same morning by Waltari's hook.
As soon as they had reach'd the other side
Waltari spurr'd his charger to a quicker pace.
The boatman the next morning brought the fish
Unto the royal cook, who gladly took
The foreign ware; which, daintily prepar'd,

Ekkehard

He serv'd that very day at the king's board.
Full of surprise King Gunther look'd at them,
Then turning to his guests he said aloud,
"In all the time that in Franconia I
Have sat upon the throne, I ne'er did see
A fish like these amongst the goodly fare
Upon my table; therefore tell me quick,
My worthy cook, whence these fair fish may come?"
The cook denounc'd the boatman, who was fetch'd,
And to the questions put, thus did reply:
"As I was sitting by the riverside,
Just as the sun was slowly gliding down
Behind the hills—the eve of yesterday—
A foreign rider in full armor came
Out from the woods, looking so proud and bold
As if he then and there came from the wars;
And though his armor was not light I trow,
He yet did spur his horse to hurry on,
As if by unseen enemies pursued.
Behind him, on the selfsame steed, a maid,
Fair as the sun, was seated, whose small hands
Did guide the animal, whose wondrous strength
I had full leisure to observe the while.
Besides this double freight of man and maid,
It bore two caskets, fasten'd to its sides,
Which, as it shook its archèd neck, gave forth
A ringing, clinking sound of precious gold.
This man I row'd across, and got the fish
Instead of copper payment from his hands."

Ekkehard

As soon as he had ended, Hagen cried :
"My friends, I bid ye all rejoice with me!
For surely 'tis my friend Waltari, who
Now from the Huns has like myself escap'd."
Loud were the shouts of joy, which from all sides
Did greet this welcome news ; but full of greed,
King Gunther, when the tumult had decreas'd,
With cunning speech the company address'd :
"I also, my good friends, bid you rejoice
With me, that I have liv'd to see the day
When the fair treasure which my father gave
Unto the Huns, a kindly providence
Has now sent back, and never be it said
That I had fail'd to profit by my luck."
Thus Gunther spoke, nor did he tarry long,
But choosing from his knights twelve of the best,
He bade them mount and follow in this quest,
On which his heart and soul was madly fix'd.
In vain did Hagen, faithful to his friend,
Bid him beware, and try to turn his thoughts
To better aims—his words did not avail ;
For avarice and lust of gold had made
Their fatal entrance into Gunther's heart.
So from the gates of Worms the well-arm'd troop
Rode onward, following Waltari's track.
Meanwhile Waltari and his gentle bride
Had enter'd a dark wood, where mighty trees
Were giving shade and shelter from the heat.
Two rugged hills extended their steep peaks

Ekkehard

In stern and gloomy grandeur heavenward;
A cool and shelter'd ravine lay between,
Blocked up by narrow walls of sandy rocks,
And cradled in a nest of trees and grass,
A very den for robbers, hard to take,
Which they no sooner spied than Walter said,
"Here let us rest, my love! For many nights
My eyes have tasted neither rest nor sleep."
Then taking off his armor, he lay down,
Resting his head upon the maiden's lap.
And further he continued: "While I sleep,
My own beloved, keep a careful look
Into the valley, and if but a cloud
Of dust be rising in the distance, mind
To wake me with a soft and gentle touch
Of thy dear fingers. Do not startle me
All of a sudden, even though a host
Of enemies be coming at a time.
I fully trust thy loving eyes"—and thus
He clos'd his own and soon was fast asleep.
Meanwhile King Gunther's greedy eye had spied
The footprints of a solitary horse,
And with exulting joy he cried aloud:
"Come on, my faithful vassals! Ere the sun
Has sunk behind those hills we shall have ta'en
Waltari with his stolen gold, I trow."
His face o'ershadow'd by a darkling cloud,
Prince Hagen said: "Believe me, noble king,
That not so lightly you will vanquish him.

Ekkehard

Of t did I see how valiant heroes fell,
Stretch'd to the ground by Walter's goodly sword,
Which never miss'd its mark nor found the man
Who was his match in all the warlike arts."
Unheeded fell these words on Gunther's ear,
And in the heat of noon they reach'd the glen,
Which as a stronghold nature had array'd.
With wakeful eyes Hildgunde kept her watch,
When suddenly she saw a cloud of dust
Rise in the distance, and could hear the tramp
Of swift approaching horses. So she laid
Her lily fingers on Waltari's hair,
And whisper'd in his ear: "Awake, my love,
For I can see a troop of armed men;
Their shields and lances glisten in the sun."
And from his drowsy eyes he rubb'd the sleep,
Then hastily he seiz'd his sword and shield,
Put on the armor and thus stood prepar'd
For bloody fight which was to follow soon.
But when Hildgunde saw the knights approach,
She threw herself despairing on the ground,
And with a wailing voice she cried aloud:
"Ah, woe is me! the Huns are coming here!
But rather than return a prisoner
A second time, I prythee, my dear lord,
To kill me with thy sword; so that if I
Shall never live to be thy wife, no man
Shall dare to make me his reluctant bride."
With soothing words Waltari then replied:

Ekkehard

"Be calm, my own, and banish needless fear;
For He, who was my help in former plight,
Will not desert me in my sorest need.
These are no Huns, my darling! Silly boys,
Not knowing what the danger they provoke
In youthful wantonness of stubborn pride."
Then with a merry laugh he cried aloud:
"Forsooth, look yonder, if I don't mistake
That man is Hagen, my alien friend!"
Then stepping to the entrance of the gorge,
The hero boldly utter'd this proud speech:
"I tell ye that not one Franconian man
Shall bring the tidings home unto his wife
That, living, he had touch'd Waltari's gold,
And,"—but he did not end the haughty speech,
But falling on his knees he humbly ask'd
God's pardon for his own presumptuousness.
Anon he rose, and letting his keen eye
Glance o'er the ranks of the approaching foes,
He said unto himself: "Of all these men
There is but one of whom I am afraid;
And that is Hagen, for I know his strength;
And that in cunning tricks there is no man
Can claim to be his equal, I believe."—
But whilst Waltari held himself prepar'd,
Sir Hagen once again did warn the king:
"If you would hear my counsel, I advise
To send some messenger and try to get
A peaceful issue; for maybe that he

Ekkehard

Himself is ready to give up the gold.
If not, there still is time to draw the sword."
So Gamelo of Metz, a stalwart knight,
Was sent as herald to Waltari then,
And soon accosted him with this demand:
"Tell me, oh stranger knight, whence thou dost come,
What is thy name, and where thy home may be?"
"First let me hear," Waltari then replied,
"Who is the man whose orders to obey
Thou camest hither?" And with haughty mien
Sir Gamelo now said: "Franconia's king,
Gunther by name, has sent me on this quest."
Waltari then resum'd: "What does it mean,
To stop and question peaceful trav'lers thus?
Waltari is my name, of Aquitain,
Whence, as a hostage to King Attila,
I once was sent whilst I was yet a boy;
And now, full tirèd of captivity,
I'm turning back to liberty and home."
"If that is so," Sir Gamelo replied,
"I've come to bid thee to deliver up
Thy golden treasure with yon damsel fair,
And thy good steed unto my lord and king;
Who, under these conditions, will be pleas'd
To grant thee life and freedom unimpair'd."
With anger flashing from his dark-blue eyes,
Waltari, when he heard this offer made,
Loudly exclaimed: "Think ye that I'm a fool?
How can thy king claim what is not his own,

Ekkehard

Commanding me as if he were a God
And I his wretched slave? As yet my hands
Are free and without fetters—yet to prove
My courtesy unto thy royal lord,
I willingly now offer him herewith
A hundred bracelets of the purest gold.”
With this fair offer Gamelo return’d,
And Hagen when he heard it eagerly
Said to the king: “Oh take what he will give,
Lest evil consequences should ensue.
A fearful dream, which came to me last night,
Does fill my soul with an unusual dread
Of coming ill. I dreamt, oh gracious lord,
That we together hunted in the wood,
When suddenly a monstrous bear appear’d,
Attacking you with such wild vehemence
That ere I yet could come to rescue you
The bear had torn the flesh up to the hip
Of your right leg; and when with headlong haste
I rais’d the lance, it struck me with one paw,
And scratch’d my eye out.” But with proud disdain
The king replied: “I now see verily
That like thy father much thou dost prefer
To fight with thy smooth tongue than with thy sword.”
With burning pain and anger, Hagen heard
These bitter words of ill-deservèd blame.
Yet, keeping a calm outside, he replied:
“If that be your opinion, I’ll refrain
From joining in this fight against my friend.”

Ekkehard

So leading out his horse to a near hill,
He there sat down to watch the bloody game.
Then Gunther turn'd to Gamelo once more :
"Go, then, and tell him that we claim the whole.
And should he still refuse to give it up,
I trow that thou art brave and strong enough
To force and throw him with thy valiant sword."
And eager to obey his king's demand,
Sir Gamelo rode out with joyous speed ;
And from the distance yet he rais'd his voice
And cried : "Halloh, good friend, I bid thee haste
And give the whole of thy fair treasure now
Into my hands for my good lord and king."
Waltari heard, but did not deign to speak—
So louder yet the knight, approaching him,
Repeated the same quest : "Out with thy gold!"
But now Waltari, losing patience too,
Cried out with angry voice : "Leave off thy noise!
One verily might think I were a thief,
Who from thy king had robb'd the treasure here ;
Say did I come to you with hostile mind,
That thus you treat me like an outlaw'd man?
Did I burn houses? or destroy the lands?
Do other damage?—that you hunt me down
Like some obnoxious, hurtful beast of prey?
If, then, to pass your land one needs must pay,
I'll offer you the double now to still
The avarice and greed of your proud king."
But Gamelo with mocking tone replied :

Ekkehard

"Yet more than this I trust you'll offer us;
I'm weary now of talk—so guard your life!"
And covering his arm with threefold shield,
He threw his lance, which would have struck the mark
If, with a subtle movement, Walter had
Not turn'd aside, so that it glided past,
Full harmless by, to fasten in the ground.
"Look out, here comes the answer,"—with these words
Waltari hurl'd his spear, which pierc'd the shield
Of Gamelo—and to his hip did nail
The luckless hand which just had miss'd its aim.
The wounded knight then letting go his shield,
With his remaining hand tried hard to wrench
The spear out of his side; but ere he could
Succeed in his endeavor, Walter's sword
Had stabb'd him to the heart; so down he sank
Without a groan into the bloody grass.
No sooner did his nephew, Scaramund,
Behold his uncle's fall, when loud he cried:
"Leave him to me!—for either I will die
Or have revenge for my dear kinsman's blood!"
So on he gallop'd up the narrow path
That to Waltari's rocky fortress led.
Gnashing his teeth with inward fury, that
Could find no other vent, he cried aloud:
"I have not come to fight for thy mean gold,
But I will have revenge for him who fell
Before my very eyes—slain by thy hand."
But with unruffled calm Waltari spoke:

Ekkehard

“If mine the fault of that, which caus’d the death
Of him thou call’st thy uncle, may I fall
Pierc’d to the heart by thine own lance or sword.”
Scarce had he ended when in hasty speed,
That work’d its own destruction, Scaramund
Had thrown his lances both; and one was caught
By Walter’s shield, whilst far beyond the mark
The second in some mighty oak stuck fast.
With naked sword, in blind and furious wrath,
He then bore down upon his enemy,
To split his head with one resounding blow,
Which made the sparks flash forth indignantly,
But could not pierce Waltari’s cap of steel—
A very masterpiece of workmanship.
Before the echo of this mighty blow
Had died away, Waltari’s spear had thrown
The rider to the ground; and though he ask’d
For mercy, ’twas too late; for with one cut
His head was sever’d from his trunk, and thus
He shar’d the doom that he could not revenge;
And with his uncle shar’d an early grave.
“Forward!” was Gunther’s cry, “and don’t desist
Before the worn-out man shall render up
Both life and gold!” Then Werinhard rode forth,
To try his chance against yon fearful man.
He was no friend of lances—all his skill
Lay in his bow—and from the distance he
Sent many an arrow ’gainst his stalwart foe.
But *he*, well cover’d by his massive shield,

Ekkehard

Took ample care not to expose himself;
So that before Sir Werinhard came near
His quiver had been emptied all in vain;
And full of anger at this first defeat
He now rush'd forward with his naked sword:
"And if my arrows are too light for thee,
Then let me see what this my sword will do!"
"Long have I waited here impatiently
For thy approach," Waltari made reply.
And like a flash of lightning his good spear
Flew through the air, the harbinger of death;
Missing Sir Werinhard, it hit the horse,
Which, rearing backward in its agony,
Threw off its rider and then fell on him,
And ere Sir Werinhard could raise himself,
Waltari's hand had seiz'd his yellow locks;
Stern and relentlessly he did the same
For him as for the others, and his head
Fell to the ground where his companions lay.
But Gunther still was loth to quit the fight,
So, as fourth combatant, came Ekkefried,
He who had slain the Duke of Saxony,
And liv'd an outlaw since at Gunther's court.
Proudly he sat upon his red roan steed,
And ere for serious fight he did prepare
With taunting word and mocking speech he tried
To rouse Waltari from his outward calm:
"Say, art thou human or some imp of hell,
Who with his magic tricks, by demons taught,

Ekkehard

Has thrown and vanquish'd better men than he?
But now believe me they will be aveng'd!"

But he with a contemptuous laugh replied:
"Forsooth I know the meaning of such stuff,
And am not frightened by thy idle boasts.
Come on and I will teach thee my dark tricks,
And prove my being master of my art!"

"I will not keep thee waiting—so beware!"

And with these words the Saxon Ekkefried,
With dex'trous hand, his iron spear did throw,
Which striking 'gainst Waltari's shield was broke
To pieces, like some wand of brittle glass.

And with another laugh, Waltari cried:
"Take back thy present, and I warrant thee
Thou'lt find the goblin knows to hit the mark!"

A moment later and his fearful spear,
Cleaving the shield, had pierc'd unto the heart
Of Ekkefried, granting a speedy death.

And as his lawful prize Waltari led
His goodly horse away unto the spot
Where Hildgund' still was watching anxiously.

The fifth who came to undertake the fight,
Hadwart by name, had only brought his sword,
With which he hoped to kill this dreadful foe.

And to the king he said before he went:
"If this my sword should be victorious,
I prithee let me have Waltari's shield!"

Spurring his horse, he rode unto the spot
Where the dead corpses lay blocking the path.

Ekkehard

So jumping to the ground he cried aloud:
"Come out, then, from thy corner, thou sly rogue,
Who like a false, envenom'd snake dost lie
In ambush, hoping thus to save thy life,
Which I am come to take with my good sword.
And as thy dainty, many-color'd shield
Will be my booty, I command thee now
To lay it down, lest it might damag'd be.
And if it were decreed that I should fall,
Thou never wilt escape with thy base life,
As my companions will avenge my death."
With calm composure Walter thus replied:
"Indeed, I would not want my trusty shield,
Which more than once to-day has sav'd my life.
Without that shield I should not now stand here."
"Then wait and see me take it!" Hadwart cried;
"Thy steed and, aye, thy rose-cheek'd damsel too
Will soon be mine! Come out then, my brave sword!"
Then there began a fighting as the like
Had ne'er been seen before in yonder wood;
So that with wonder and amazement those
Franconians stood and lookèd on the while.
At last, to end the combat with one stroke,
Hadwart dealt such a blow as must have fell'd
Waltari to the ground if with his spear
The blow he had not parried, and anon
He wrench'd the weapon out of Hadwart's hand
And threw it far away over his head.
In ignominious flight Sir Hadwart then

Ekkehard

Tried hard to save his life, but Alpher's son
With swifter feet did follow on his heels:
"Stop yet a while, thou hast forgot thy shield!"
And with these words he rais'd the iron lance,
And struck it through Sir Hadwart's corselet, so
That as he fell he pinn'd him to the ground.
The sixth who volunteer'd his chance to take
Was Hagen's nephew, young Sir Patavid.
On seeing him prepar'd to meet his doom,
His uncle feeling pity for the lad,
With persuasive speech tried hard to turn
His daring fancy from this bold endeavor:
"Oh, nephew, see how death is lurking there,
And do not waste your fresh and youthful life
Against yon man, whom you will conquer not."
But Patavid, not heeding this advice,
Fearlessly went, spurr'd by ambitious pride.
With mournful heart Sir Hagen sat apart,
And heaving a deep sigh he spoke these words:
"Oh ever greedy youth! oh baneful thirst of gold,
I wish that hell would gather all her golden dross
And set the dragons to watch over it,
Instead of tempting wretched human souls
Into perdition. There's none has got enough,
And to gain more they risk their very lives
And souls into the bargain. Wretched fools!
That dig and toil and scrape, and do not see
That they are often digging their own grave,
Beside which death stands grinning. Say what news

Ekkehard

Shall I take back to greet thy mother's ears,
And thy poor wife, who waits for thy return?"
And as he thought of her despairing grief,
A solitary tear would trickle down.
"Farewell, farewell for ever, nephew mine!"
He cried in broken accents, which the winds
Did carry off unto Waltari's ear,
Whose heart was touch'd by his old friend's complaint,
And thus address'd the bold, tho' youthful knight:
"I warn thee, my brave lad, to spare thy strength
For other deeds, and not to risk the fate
Of those who came before thee—stalwart knights—
For I should grieve to lay thee by their side."
"My death does not regard thee; come and fight,
Forsooth I did not come for idle talk,"
Was Patavid's reply, and as he spoke
His whizzing spear came flying through the air.
But by Waltari's own 'twas beaten off
With such a mighty stroke, that e'en before the feet
Of fair Hildgund' it fell, close by the cave.
A cry of fear escapèd from her lips.
Then, from her rock, she anxiously look'd forth
To see whether her knight still kept the ground;
Another time he rais'd his warning voice,
Bidding his enemy desist from further fight;
Who, heedless of these words, still forward press'd
With naked sword in hand, hoping to fell
Waltari with one strong and dex'trous blow.
But he bent down his head, so that the sword

Ekkehard

Not meeting with resistance, cut the air
And draggèd him who held it to the ground;
And ere that he could rise, Waltari's sword
Had dealt the death-blow with unsparing hand.
Quick to avenge his friend, Sir Gerwig now
Did spur his noble steed, which with one bound
Jump'd o'er the bodies that block'd up the way.
And ere Waltari yet could free his sword
From his last foe, Sir Gerwig's battle-ax—
The fav'rite weapon of Franconians then—
Flew through the air, a fearful sight to see.
Quicker than thought, Waltari seiz'd his shield
To guard himself; and with one backward bound
Took up his trusty lance, and thus prepar'd,
Unflinching stood, awaiting the attack.
No single word was said on either side;
Each thirsted for the fight with hungry soul;
One to avenge the death of his dear friend,
The other to defend his life and gold,
And her he valued more, far more than both.
Full long they fought with unrelenting zeal
A well-match'd pair, until Waltari's lance,
Lifting the shield of his antagonist,
Did find its way into his corsèlet;
And with a hollow groan he reelèd back,
Expiring on the spot where he fell down.
With fear and wonder the Franconians saw
Waltari's prowess and their friend's defeat;
So that at last they all besought the king

Ekkehard

To cease from further fight ; but he replied :
"Ah well indeed I never would have thought
To find such weak and craven-hearted men
Amongst my knights that I deem'd brave before.
What ! does misfortune make your spirits fail,
Instead of raising them to boiling heat ?
And do you mean to say we should return
Conquer'd and beaten by one single man ?
Nay, if before I only wish'd to have
The stranger's gold, I now will have his life !
The blood which he has shed does cry for blood !"
He ceas'd, and at his words new courage fill'd
The hearts of his brave knights, so that now each
Would be the first to try the bloody game,
And in a file they now rode up the path.
Meanwhile Waltari, there to cool his brow,
Had ta'en his helmet off and hung it up
On the strong branch of a tall, stately oak.
And as the fragrant breezes cool'd his brow,
He felt new strength and vigor in his limbs ;
But while he thus stood breathing the fresh air,
Sir Randolph on his fiery steed advanc'd
And came upon him with such sudden speed
That with his iron bar quite unawares
He would have pierc'd Waltari where he stood
If that the armor which did shield his breast
Had not been forg'd by Wieland's dext'rous hands,
And thus resisted Randolph's fierce assault.
Not having time to don his cap of steel,

Ekkehard

He seiz'd his shield as Randolf rais'd his sword
And dealt a cut which, grazing Walter's head,
Cut off some locks of his abundant hair.
The second blow now struck against the edge
Of Walter's shield with such fierce vehemence
That it stuck fast, and ere that he could wrench
It from this prison hold, Waltari's hand
Had dragg'd him from the saddle to the ground.
"Ha!" cried he, "thou shalt pay for my shorn locks
With thine own pate!" and as he said the words,
Sir Randolf's head lay bleeding on the ground.
The ninth who now rode up in furious haste
Was Helmnod, bearing neither sword nor lance,
But on a long and twisted cord instead
A heavy trident set with many spikes.
And in the rear his friends held the one end
Of the strong rope, hoping that when the spikes
Had taken hold of Walter's shield to drag
Him to the ground with their united force.
"Take care of thy bald head!" Sir Helmnod cried,
"For death is coming toward thee from above!"
And as he spoke he threw the curious arms
With practis'd hands—nor did he miss the aim.
Right in the middle of Waltari's shield
It fix'd its iron claws, and a loud cry
Of joyous exultation fill'd the air
As this success was noted by the rest:
Who now, e'en aided by the king himself,
Pull'd hard with all their might—yet 'twas in vain,

Ekkehard

For like some giant oak he kept the ground
Until, wearied at last with such vain sport,
He suddenly let go his faithful shield.
So, trusting merely on his coat of mail
And his own sword, he madly rush'd along,
And with one fearful blow he split the head
And neck of Helmnod through his cap of steel.
Before Sir Trogus yet could free himself
From the entangling rope that held him fast,
To fetch his arms which all had laid aside
Not to be cumber'd as they pull'd the rope,
Waltari with one slash of his fierce sword
Had lam'd him on both legs and ta'en his shield
Before Sir Trogus could stretch out his hand,
With which he now took up a mighty stone
And hurl'd it with such vigor through the air
That it did break his own strong shield in twain.
Then, crawling onward through the shelt'ring grass,
Sir Trogus stealthily regain'd his sword,
Which joyfully he rais'd above his head.
His hero's heart still long'd to die in fight,
And so he cried aloud: "Oh that a friend
Were near to help me, or my trusty shield
Had not been robb'd! I tell thee, haughty knight,
Not thine own bravery, but want of chance
Has conquer'd me. Come on and take my sword!"
"Thy wish shall be fulfill'd!" Waltari cried.
And quick as lightning he flew down the path,
Cut off the hand that vainly rais'd the sword,

Ekkehard

So that it fell a useless member now
Unto the ground. But ere the final blow,
Which was to end his soul's captivity,
He yet had dealt, Sir Tannast gallop'd down,
To help his friend in this dread hour of need.
Full angrily Waltari turnèd round,
And with a ghastly wound beneath his arm
Sir Tannast fell, bleeding beside his friend;
And murmuring "Farewell, beloved maid!"
He breath'd his last, and with a smile he died.
Full of despair Sir Trogus rais'd his voice
To heap such bitter words and sharp insults
Upon Waltari's head, that he, inflam'd
With angry rage, to stop his sland'rous tongue,
Now throttled him with his own chain of gold.
When all his knights had thus been slain, the king
In bitter sorrow fled unto the spot
Where Hagen sat in gloomy solitude;
And shedding scalding tears of rage and grief,
He tried to touch his heart with subtle speech
And thus to rouse him from his apathy.
But cold as ice Sir Hagen made reply:
"Full well thou know'st, oh king, that the pale blood
Which from my fathers I inherited,
Whose craven hearts would shrink with coward fear
When they but heard of war, does hinder me
To fight with yonder man. 'Tis thy own speech
Which now does lame my arm. I can not fight."
Again the king tried to appease his wrath,

Ekkehard

Humbling himself by asking pardon now,
And promising that if he would but fight
He would reward him amply, ending thus:
"Indeed, I never shall survive the day
On which the burning shame will be reveal'd,
When in the streets and highroads 'twill be said,
'One single man did kill a host of knights
And there was none who would avenge the deed!'"
Still Hagen hesitated, thinking how
Waltari once had been his bosom friend,
His brother almost; but when now at last
His king and master fell upon his knees,
And with uplifted hands besought his help,
Then the ice melted which had bound his heart
In chains of pride and hatred; and he felt
That if he still refus'd his honor would
Forever be defil'd, and so he spoke:
"Whate'er thou biddest me to do, my king,
It shall be done, and what no bribe on earth
Could have obtain'd, the faith I owe to thee
Has now accomplish'd; but before I try
My sword and strength against my quondam friend,
I fain would find some way to drive him from
His present stronghold, which does make his strength.
For whilst he keeps that place, 'tis certain death
To come but near him. Ah, believe me, king,
That never even to avenge the death
Of my fair nephew would I raise my hand
Against my well-tried friend. Only for thee,

Ekkehard

To save thee from the shame of this defeat,
I sacrifice my friendship. Let us hence,
So that, imagining that we were gone,
He too will ride away, suspecting naught;
And in the open field, quite unprepar'd,
We will attack him; and I warn thee that
The fight will not be easy even so.”
This cunning plan did please the king so well
That he embrac'd Sir Hagen on the spot,
And then they went away to hide themselves,
Leaving their horses grazing in the woods.
The sun had disappear'd behind the hills,
And now our hero, wearied from the fight,
Stood there, revolving in his inmost heart
Whether 'twere best to rest and pass the night
In his good stronghold, or to hurry on,
And find his way out of this wilderness.
His soul misgave him when he saw the king
Kissing Sir Hagen with exulting mien.
Yet, after he had thought of this and that,
He made resolve 'twere better to remain,
So that it were not said that he had fled
Like some base criminal at fall of night.
So cutting down from the surrounding trees
And thorny brambles many a branch and bough,
He made himself a strong and solid hedge,
To guard him 'gainst an unforeseen attack.
With deep-drawn sighs he then walk'd to the spot
Where all the corpses lay his hand had fell'd,

Ekkehard

And putting back each head unto its trunk,
He threw himself down on his knees and prayed :
"Oh Lord of hosts, whom all the world obeys,
Without whose holy will nothing is done ;
I thank Thee that to-day Thou wert with me,
Helping me to defeat mine enemies,
Who thirsted all to drink my guiltless blood.
Oh Lord, whose mighty word destroyeth sin,
Yet taketh pity on us sinners all,
I pray Thee now to show Thy mercy rare
On these my hand has slain, so that their souls
May enter all into Thy paradise,
And I may meet them there when my day comes."
Thus Walter pray'd ; then, rising from the ground,
He went to fetch the horses of the dead,
And tied them all together with a cord
Made of some willow branches growing near.
Then, taking off his armor, he lay down
Upon his shield to rest his weary limbs ;
And speaking tender words unto Hildgund',
He bade her watch his slumbers as before,
For much he needed some refreshing sleep.
Thus all the night the fair and faithful maid
Sat by his side, driving the sleep away
That tried to steal upon her unawares,
By softly singing little bits of song.
Before the dawn of day Waltari rose,
And telling her to sleep now in her turn,
He paced the ground with calm and even steps,

Ekkehard

His lance in hand, ready for an attack.
And thus the night wore on, and morning came;
A soft, refreshing mist fell down as dew,
Hanging in pearly drops on grass and trees.
Then from the corpses, with all rev'rent care,
Waltari took the armors, sword and all,
Leaving their costly dresses though untouch'd.
Four of the chargers then were laden with
His rightful booty, whilst the other two
Were destin'd for himself and his fair bride.
Yet ere they started, mounting on a tree,
Waltari with his falcon eyes survey'd
The scenery round, but seeing nought
Which might have rous'd suspicion, he resolv'd
To wait no more, and thus they now rode forth,
Hildgunde with the booty-laden steeds
Riding ahead, whilst Walter clos'd the train.
Scarce were they gone when Hildgund', looking back,
Beheld two stalwart knights approaching fast;
And paling with dismay, she cried aloud:
"Oh dear, my lord! the end is coming now;
I pray thee fly, and save thy precious life!"
Turning his head, Waltari saw the foe,
And said with tranquil mien: "No man shall say
Waltari fled whilst he could wield the sword!
Here, take the reins of King Attila's horse,
And save the golden treasure. Yonder wood
Will give thee shelter whilst I will accost
The strangers thus, as it becomes a knight."

Ekkehard

The maiden tremblingly obey'd his words,
Whilst he prepar'd his trusty lance and shield.
Yet from a distance Gunther callèd out :
"Now thou no more canst hide between the rocks,
Stand still and let us see whether the end
Will not reveal another countenance!
And whether fortune is thy hired maid!"
But with contemptuous mien Waltari turn'd
His head away, as if he had not heard,
And looking full in Hagen's face, he said :
"Oh Hagen, my old friend, what has occur'd,
That as an enemy you come to me?
Hast thou forgot the tears which thou hast shed
When lying in my arms for the last time,
That thus thou treatest me, thy faithful friend?
Indeed, I thought the day that we should meet
Would be a joyous one for thee and me;
And that with open arms and loving words
Thou wouldst accost me. Oh, how oft my heart
Would beat with restless longing when I thought
Of thee, so far away, yet still my friend.
Hast thou forgotten then our boyish days,
When both did work and strive for one great aim;
Then when I look'd into thine eyes I felt
As if my parents and my home were near,
As if I were not quite forsaken yet.
And so I kept my love and faith for thee,
And, therefore, pray thee to depart in peace,
And as a friendly gift I'll fill thy shield

Ekkehard

With gold and jewels even to the brim."
But with a sombre look and angry voice
Sir Hagen to this speech now made reply :
"Indeed, I think that thou didst break the faith
When by thy cruel sword my nephew fell ;
His life and not thy gold I claim from thee,
And will hear nought of friendship past and gone."
Thus speaking he alighted from his horse,
As likewise did Waltari and the king ;
And so they stood prepar'd, two against one.
Sir Hagen was the first to break the peace,
And with an able hand he threw the spear,
Which proudly pierc'd the air with hissing sound ;
But without deigning e'en to turn aside,
Waltari stood extending his good shield,
From which the lance rebounded with such force
As if its point had struck against a wall of stone.
Then Gunther threw his spear with good intent,
But with such feeble arm that it fell down,
Scarce having touch'd the rim of Walter's shield.
Their lances being gone, both drew the sword,
And with it level'd many a well-aim'd blow,
Which all were parried by Waltari's lance.
At last an evil thought struck Gunther's mind,
'And whilst Sir Hagen fiercely onward press'd
He stealthily bent down to seize his lance ;
But just when he had seized the oaken shaft,
Waltari, throwing bold Sir Hagen back,
Did place his foot on the coveted spear.

Ekkehard

Full of dismay, the king stood there aghast,
Not moving hand or foot, so that his life
Was sore endanger'd, when Sir Hagen sprang
With deerlike swiftness forward, shielding him,
So that recovering by slow degrees
He once again could join in the attack,
That waged fiercer now than e'er before;
Yet still Waltari stood like some strong rock,
Unmov'd and calm amidst the breakers' roar.
But from his eyes shot forth such scathing looks,
And on his brow in triple sisterhood
Sat fury, hatred, and the fierce desire
To die or gain the bloody victory.
At last to Hagen he address'd these words:
"Oh champion, I do not fear thy might!
And let thy vaunted strength be what it may,
I mean to wrestle with thee." At these words
He hurl'd his lance with such unerring aim
That part of Hagen's armor was torn off.
Then turning suddenly to Gunther, he
With one astounding cut of his good sword
Did sever the right leg from Gunther's frame.
Half dead, King Gunther fell upon his shield;
But when Waltari just had rais'd his arm,
To deal the mortal blow, Sir Hagen saw
The peril of his king, and with one bound
He threw himself between, so that the sword
Fell on his helmet with a clashing sound,
And then was shiver'd into sev'ral bits.

Ekkehard

With angry frown Waltari threw the hilt
Contemptuously aside, for though of gold
What could it now avail him? Then he rais'd
His iron-pointed lance with careless hand;
But ere he yet had pois'd it, Hagen's sword
Cut off the hand, which to its enemies
Had been so fearful and so far renown'd—
And now lay helpless on the bloody ground.
Yet even then Waltari's noble heart
Thought not of flight; but pressing back his pain,
His left hand grasp'd the Hunnic scimitar
Which still was left him in his hour of need,
And which aveng'd him, slashing Hagen's face
In such a fearful way that his right eye,
Besides six teeth, he lost by this one blow.
Then both did drop their arms, and thus at last
The bloody fight was ended. Both had shown
Their strength and valor in an equal way,
And now did part with knightly courtesy.
Then, sitting side by side, they stanch'd their wounds
With flowers, until Walter's ringing voice
Had brought the fair Hildgund' unto their side,
Who with her gentle hands then dress'd the wounds.
As soon as this was done, Waltari said:
"Now, sweet, my love, I prythee go and bring
For each a cup of wine, for verily
I think we have deserv'd it all to-day.
First give the cup to Hagen, my old friend,
Who, like a faithful vassal to his king,

Ekkehard

Has fought full valiantly in his behalf;
Next give it me and then the king may drink,
Who least has done, and therefore shall be last.”
The maiden doing as her lord had said,
Stepp'd up to Hagen, who, though plagued with thirst,
Refus'd to drink before Waltari's lips
Had been refreshèd by the cooling draft.
And when the pangs of thirst had thus been still'd,
The two, who just before had been dread foes,
Now sat together, holding friendly talk
And jesting gaily as in days gone by.
“In future thou, my friend,” Sir Hagen said,
“Must wear a leathern glove, well stuff'd with wool,
On thy right arm, to make the world believe
Thou still hast got both hands at thy command,
And at thy right side thou must wear the sword;
But worse than all, when thou wilt clasp thy bride
With thy left arm thou must embrace her then—
In fact, all thou wilt do in future life
Must awkward be—*left-handed* as they say.”
Briskly Waltari to this jest replied:
“Oh, stop thy railing, poor and one-eyed man,
For with my left hand here I yet may kill
The boar and stag, which thou no more wilt eat;
And in my fancy I can see thee look
On friends and foes and all the world awry!
But for the sake of our youthful days
And ancient friendship, I will counsel thee
To bid thy nurse make porridge and milk soups

Ekkehard

When thou com'st home, such as befit thy state
Of toothless incapacity for other food."
Thus they renew'd the friendship of their youth,
And after having rested laid the king,
Who suffer'd greatly, on his horse's back.
And then the two Franconians slowly rode
To Worms, from where the day before they came,
In all the pride of their exulting hearts.
Meanwhile Waltari and his gentle bride
Went on to Aquitania, Walter's home,
Where they were both receiv'd with tears of joy
By his old father, who had long despair'd
Of holding in his arms his son again,
Who soon was wedded to fair Hildègund;
And when his father died, for thirty years
Waltari sway'd the sceptre, lov'd by all.

Oh, much beloved reader, if my song
Has been but roughly chanted, I implore
Thy kind forgiveness—I did my best.
Praisèd be Jesus Christ! Thus ends Waltari's song.

Ekkehard

CHAPTER XXV

THE LAST ECHO, AND END

AND he has sung well, our hermit Ekkehard; and his Waltari song is a venerable monument of the German spirit: the first great epic, forged from out of the mass of national heroic legends, which, in spite of the destroying rust of ages, was bequeathed undamaged to later generations. To be sure, other notes have been struck in it than those which the Epigonic poets have hatched in their little gilt-edged books. The spirit of a great heroic time breathes through it, wild and awful like the roaring of the tempest in mighty oak trees. There is a sounding and clinking of swords, dashing and splitting of helmets, while but little is heard of gallant speeches and tender wooing, or would-be eloquent dissertations on God and the universe, and Heaven knows what! All that is shown to us there is a Titanic fight and Titanic jests; old knighthood in all its simple sternness; true, honest, silent love, and genuine, open-faced hatred: these were the materials for Ekkehard's epic; and therefore his work has become grand and mighty, and stands at the portals of German poetry, tall and strong, like one of those ironclad giants that the plastic art of later days loved to set

Ekkehard

as gatekeepers before the entrance of its palaces. He whom the roughness of the ancient, often almost heathenish, ideas affects as does the rude blast on a seacoast, which is apt to produce a cold in the dress-coat-wearing individual, will be pleased to consider that the epic has been sung by one who had himself fought with the Huns; and that he composed it many hundreds of feet above the plains, while his curls were being ruffled by the wind which had swept over the glaciers on the Sentis; that his mantle was a wolf's skin, and that a she-bear was his first auditor.

'Tis a pity that the sportive sprites and goblins have ceased this many a long day to practise their merry tricks; otherwise it might not be amiss to many a writer of the present day if he were suddenly carried off from his mahogany table by invisible hands to the green meadow of the Ebenalp, up to those heights where the thunder, with its manifold echoes, rolls through the ravines and glens, and where the golden vulture rises up to the rainbow in proud, solitary circles. There a man must either compose something grand, pithy, and of large dimensions, or he must sorrowfully fall on his knees, like the prodigal son, and confess before those magnificent scenes of nature that he is wretched in his shortcomings.

Perhaps some of our readers would be pleased to hear that Ekkehard, after having completed his

Ekkehard

song, died a peaceful death. It would verily have been a most touching conclusion, "how he had reclined before his cavern, with eyes strained toward the Bodensee; his harp leaning against the rock; the parchment-roll in his hands—and how his heart had broken!" Further, one might have added some fine simile: how the poet was consumed by the burning flames of his genius, like the torch which is burned to ashes while it gives its light. But this touching spectacle, I am sorry to say, Ekkehard did not afford to posterity.

Genuine poetry makes a man fresh and healthy. So Ekkehard's cheeks had assumed a brighter color during his work, and he often experienced a feeling of well-being which made him stretch out his arm, as if he were about to strike down a wolf or bear with one blow of his fist.

But when his Waltari had bravely conquered all dangers and deathly wounds, then he gave a shout of delight which made the stalactite walls of his cavern reecho. The goats in their stable received a double quantity of herbs that day, and to the young goatherd he gave some silver coins to induce him to go down to Sennwald in the valley of the Rhine, there to procure a jug of red wine.

It was in those days just as it is now, "*Libro completo, saltat scriptor pede lato,*" when the book is finished, the writer jumps with joy.

Therefore on that evening he sat on the Ebenalp

Ekkehard

in the cottage of the old herdsman, and they did not spare the jug; and lastly Ekkehard seized the huge Alpine horn, and, mounting a rock, blew a mighty strain in the direction of the hazy distant Hegau Mountains; and the notes swelled out loud and triumphant, as if they wanted to reach the Duchess's ears, so as to make her step out on her balcony, followed by Praxedis, whom he then would have liked to greet with a laugh.

"If I were to come into the world again," he said to his friend the master of the Ebenalp, "and were to drop down from the sky just where I pleased, I verily believe that I would choose no other spot than the Wildkirchlein."

"You are not the first man who has been pleased with our residence," laughed the old man. "When brother Gottschalk was still living, five Italian monks once came up to pay him a visit, and they brought some better wine than this with them; and they jumped and danced till their habits flew. 'Twas only when they went downhill again that they composed their faces into the necessary serious expression, and one of them, before leaving, made a long speech to our goats. 'Don't blab, you dear goats,' he said, 'for the Abbot of Novalesse need not know anything of our saints' raptures.'"

"But now, mountain brother, I wish you to tell me one thing, and that is what you have been doing all these last days, cowering in your cavern?

Ekkehard

I have well observed that you have drawn many hooks and runes on your asses' skin, and I trust that you are not concocting some evil charm against our flocks or mountains. Else"—a threatening look finished the sentence.

"I was merely writing a song," said Ekkehard.

The herdsman shook his head. "Writing! that confounded writing," he growled. "Well, 'tis none of my business; and I trow that the high Sentis will still be looking down on our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, without their knowing how to guide pen or pencil; for I shall never believe that writing will do a man any good. Man, if he wants to be God's likeness, must walk upright on both his feet, while he who wants to write must sit down with a bent and crooked back. So now I ask you whether that is not just the contrary of how God would have it? Consequently it must be an invention of the Devil. Therefore, mountain brother, mind what you are about. And whenever you try that trick again, and I find you cowering down like a marmot in your cavern, and writing—thunder and lightning! then I will exercise my power as Master of the Alps, and I will tear up your parchment leaves into little bits, so that the wind will scatter them among the fir trees below! Up here everything has to be orderly and simple, and I tell you once for all that we will have nothing to do with new-fangled things!"

Ekkehard

"I promise not to do it again," said Ekkehard, laughing and holding out his hand.

The brave Master of the Alps had grown warm over the red wine from Sennwald.

"Thunder and lightning!" he continued. "What after all is the meaning of writing down a song? 'Tis mere foolery! There! Try and write this down if you can." And at these words he began to give forth an Alpine song, in such rough, unmodulated sounds that even the sharpest ear would have found some difficulty in discovering a note which could have been repeated vocally or in writing.

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At the same hour, in a vine-clad summer-house of the Bishop's garden at Passau on the Danube, a man in the first bloom of manhood was sitting before a stone table. An indescribably subtle expression played round his lips, half hidden by an ample brown beard, while luxurious curls fell down from under his velvet cap. His dark eyes followed the characters which his right hand was tracing on a parchment roll. Two fair-haired boys were standing beside his armchair, curiously peeping over his shoulder. Many a parchment sheet was already covered with the recital of tempests and battles, and the bloody deaths of valiant heroes, and the writer was now approaching the end. And before long he laid aside his pen and took a long

Ekkehard

and solemn draft of Hungarian wine out of a pointed goblet.

"Is it done?" asked one of the boys.

"Yes, 'tis all finished," said the writer, "how it began, and how it happened, and how it ended with sorrow and shame!"

He held out the manuscript to him, and the boys ran away jubilant to their uncle, Bishop Pilgerim, and showed it to him. "And thou art in it also, dear uncle," they cried. "'The Bishop with his niece to Passau then did go.' Twice thou art in it—and here again, a third time!"

Pilgerim the Bishop then stroked his white beard and said: "You may well rejoice, my dear nephews, that Conrad has written down this tale for you; and let me tell you that if the Danube streamed with gold for three entire days and nights ye might not fish up anything more precious than that song, which contains the greatest history the world ever saw."

The scrivener, meanwhile, stood with radiant countenance under the vine leaves and blooming honeysuckle in the garden, looking at the withered red leaves which autumn had shaken from the trees, and then he gazed downward into the soft-flowing Danube, and in his right ear he heard a loud ringing sound; for at that very moment Ekkehard had filled a wooden cup with wine, and spoken thus to the old herdsman: "I once had a

Ekkehard

good comrade, for a better one can not be found anywhere, and his name is Conrad. The love of women and worldly ambition are all naught, but I shall ever remain the debtor of old and faithful friendship unto my last dying day. So you must now drink his health with me, and I tell you he is a man who would please the old Sentis well if he were here."

And the herdsman had emptied the cup and had said: "Mountain brother, I believe you. Long life to him!"

Therefore the man at Passau had felt his ear tingle; but he did not know the reason. The sound had not yet died out when the Bishop came toward him, and he was followed by a groom who led a little white mare, which was old and shabby; and when one looked at it closer, one could see that it was blind of one eye. And the Bishop nodded his head with the pointed mitre and graciously said: "Master Conrad, that which you have written to please my nephews shall not be without its reward. My tried battle-horse is yours!"

A faint, half melancholy smile played round Master Conrad's finely cut lips, while he thought: "Well, it only serves me right. Why did I become a poet!" But aloud he said: "May God reward you, Sir Bishop! I hope that you will grant me a few days' leave to rest myself from my work."

Then he caressed the poor old horse, and

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mounted it without waiting for the answer. And he sat both proudly and gracefully in the saddle, and even persuaded his humble charger to fall into a tolerable canter, so that he soon disappeared.

"I would wager my best falcon against a pair of turtle-doves," said the elder of the two boys, "if he is not riding again to Bechelaren, to the margravian castle. He has said many a time, 'Quite as well as I can bring my gracious master the Bishop into the song, I can also in it erect a memorial to the margravine Gotelinde and her fair daughter. They, after all, will appreciate it most.'"

Meanwhile, Master Conrad had already passed out of the gate of the Bishop's town. Casting a longing look into the distance, he began to sing with a clear voice:

"Then boldly spoke the minstrel, his voice rang through
the air:

Oh margrave, noble margrave, God gave thee blessing rare
In giving thee so fair a spouse, and true as she is fair.
And if I only were a king, and reigned o'er land and sea,
To make thy daughter my dear queen my only wish
would be.

For ne'er a maid more beautiful—"

But when he had got thus far a cloud of dust blew right into his face, so that involuntary tears started into his eyes, and his singing was stopped.

The lines were out of the work for which the

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Bishop had just now rewarded him. It was an epic in the German tongue, and was called "The Song of the Nibelungen!"

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By and by autumn began, and although the evening red is more glowing and brilliant than in any other part of the year, it is also accompanied by fresh breezes, so that the inhabitants of the Alps get ready to decamp their dwellings in the valleys, and no wolf's skin then can prevent a man's teeth from chattering.

Fresh snow was glistening on all the peaks around, and was evidently not intending to melt again that year. Ekkehard had preached his last sermon to the herdsmen. After it Benedicta sauntered up to him.

"Now 'tis all over with our merrymaking up here," said she, "for to-morrow man and beast will betake themselves to their winter quarters. Where are you going, mountain brother?"

The question fell heavily on his heart.

"I should like best to remain here," said he.

Benedicta struck up a merry peal of laughter. "One can well see that you have not spent a winter up here, else you would not wish for another. I should like to see you snowed up in your hermitage, with the cold creeping in at every chink and crevice, so as to make you tremble like an aspen leaf, while avalanches come thundering

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down round about you, and the icicles are growing right into your very mouth. . . . And when you attempt to go down into the valley to fetch provisions, then the snow blocks up the path as high as a house; one step and you sink down to the knees; a second—traladibidibidib!—and the cowl is all that is left, and no more is to be seen of you than of a fly that has fallen into a pot of milk. Besides, we have had so many great tit-mice this year—that means a severe winter. How pleasant the long winter evenings will be! Then we sit about the warm stove, and spin by the light of the pine chips. The wheels fly round, and the fire crackles, and we tell the most beautiful stories, and all good boys may come and listen. 'Tis a pity that you have not become a herdsman, mountain brother, for then I could take you with me to our spinning-room."

"'Tis a pity," said Ekkehard.

The next morning they went down the valley in gay procession. The old herdsman had put on his finest linen shirt, and looked like a jolly old patriarch. With a round leathern cap on his head, and the handsomest milk-pail on his left shoulder, he walked ahead, singing a local ditty in a clear, fresh voice. Then came Benedicta's goats, the skirmishers of the great bovine army, their keeper wearing in her dark locks the last Alpine roses, which already showed some yellow leaves. Then came the big large-spotted Susanna, the queen of

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the herd of cows, wearing the heavy bell round her neck, in sign of her high rank. Dignified and proud was her gait, and whenever one of the others ventured to outstrip her, she gave her such a contemptuous and threatening look that the presumptuous cow instantly fell back. Slowly and heavily the rest of the herd went downhill. "Farewell, thou dainty mountain grass," was probably thought by many a plump cow, as it cropped a stray flower here and there by the wayside.

The bull carried the milking-stool between his horns, and on his huge back sat the goatherd, with his face to the tail, holding up the outstretched fingers of both his hands to his not over-delicately formed nose, and calling out the following doggerel verses:

"The summer's gone away, and autumn's come aright,
So now we will bid you farewell and good-night.
Ye silent, snowy masters, good-by then all together,
And may your sleep be sound until there's better
weather!"

A sledge with the simple furniture and kitchen utensils closed the train.

By degrees herdsman, cows, and goats disappeared in the fir wood below, their joyous songs and the merry tinkle of the cow-bells dying away in the distance; and then it became silent and

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lonely, as on that evening when Ekkehard had first knelt before the cross of the Wildkirchlein.

He entered his hermitage. During his solitary life in the mountains he had learned to understand that solitude is only a school for life, and not *life* itself, and that he who in this busy, active world tries to be only a passive spectator, wrapped up in himself, must in the end become a useless being.

"There's no help for it," said he, "I too must return to the valley! The snow is too cold, and I am too young to remain a hermit."

"Farewell then, mighty Sentis, thou good and trusty friend;

Farewell, ye bonny meadows, that healthy breezes send!

I thank thee for thy blessings, oh holy solitude,

That took away my sorrow, heal'd my rebellious mood.

My heart now beateth calmly; my banner is unfurl'd,

And longing for new battles, I go into the world.

My youth was idle dreaming, then came the darksome night,

But here, among the mountains, I woke to life and light."

He seized his knapsack, and into it put his scanty belongings. His most precious possession, the Waltari song, carefully wrapped up, was placed on the top. A smile played round his lips as he looked about on the few things which he left behind. On a stone stood the half empty ink-bot-

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tle, which he took and threw down the abyss, where it broke into many glittering fragments. The three-cornered harp, leaning against the wall outside, had something melancholy about it.

"Thou shalt remain here, and sweeten the lonely hours of him who comes after me," said he. "But mind not to give forth weak, sickly sounds; else it were better that the water should drop down on thy strings from the crevices, so that they get rusty, and that the winds from the glaciers break them. I have sung my song!"

Thereupon he hung the harp on a nail.

During his hermit's life he had carved for himself a strong bow—quiver and arrows being still left from Gottschalk's time. Thus he was well armed, and after hanging his wolf's skin mantle round his shoulders, he stood before his hermitage, casting a long, long look at the beautiful scenery around, at his beloved mountain peaks, and then let his gaze glide down into the depths, where the sea-green Seealpsee peeped forth from between the dark fir trees. It was all as beautiful as ever.

A black martin, which lived in a crevice of the same rock that sheltered him, confidently flew down on his shoulder and pecked his cheek, then, spreading its black and red plumage, it flew up into the blue air, as if it wanted to tell the Sentis that the hermit was going away.

Firmly setting the point of his spear into the

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ground, he walked down the well-accustomed giddy path. When he had reached the Aesher, he stopped once more, and waving his hand to his hermitage, he uttered a long, loud farewell "Lal-loo-oo-oo-oo!" that reverberated from the Kamor and Hohencasten to the Maarwiese, until it was lost in the distant clefts of the mountains.

"*He* can do it well," said a returning herdsman in the valley to one of his comrades.

"Almost like a goatherd," said the other, as Ekkehard disappeared behind a rocky wall.

The rising sun had already cast his rays for some time on the Wildkirchlein, which, like a deserted nest, seemed to look mournfully into the valley below.

At the lake people were preparing for the coming vintage. One fine evening, Dame Hadwig sat in her garden, with the faithful Praxedis by her side. The Greek had unpleasant times now. Her mistress was out of tune, discontented, and taciturn. To-day, as usual, she could not entice her into a conversation. It was a day of evil remembrances.

"To-day it is just a year," Praxedis began, with seeming indifference, "that we sailed over the lake, and paid a visit to St. Gallus."

The Duchess made no reply. "A great deal has happened since then," Praxedis was going to add, but the words died on her lips.

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"And have you heard, gracious mistress, what people are saying of Ekkehard?" resumed she, after a considerable pause.

Dame Hadwig looked up. Her mouth was working.

"And what do people say?" she asked carelessly.

"Master Spazzo recently met the Abbot from Reichenau," said Praxedis, "who accosted him thus: 'The Alps have been highly favored, for the walls of the Sentis are echoing with the sound of the lyre and poetical twitterings; a new Homer has built his nest up there, and if he only knew in which cave the muses are living, he might lead their dance like the Cynthian Apollo.' And when Master Spazzo, shaking his head, replied, 'How does that concern me?' then the Abbot said: 'The poet's no other than your Ekkehard. This news has reached us from the cloister school at St. Gall.' Master Spazzo rejoined laughingly: 'How can a man sing who is not even able to tell a story?'"

The Duchess had risen. "Be silent," said she, "I won't hear anything more about it." Praxedis understood the wave of her hand, and sorrowfully went away.

Dame Hadwig's heart, however, felt something different from what her tongue uttered. She stepped up to the garden wall, and looked over toward the Helvetian Mountains. Dusk had set in, and long, heavy steel-gray clouds stood unmov-

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ing over the evening red that glowed and trembled beneath them.

In looking at the beauty and softness of the waning day, her heart was softened also. Her eyes were riveted on the Sentis, and it was as if she saw a vision, in which the Heavens opened and sent down two angels, who, descending to those heights, lifted up a man in a familiar monk's habit, and the man was pale and dead, and an aureole of light, clear and beautiful, surrounded the airy procession. . . .

But Ekkehard was not dead.

A low hissing sound made the Duchess start up from her reverie. Her eyes glided over the dark rocky wall, down which the prisoner had once made his escape, and beheld a dark figure disappearing in the shade, while an arrow sped toward her, and dropped heavily at her feet.

She bent down to take up the curious missile. No hostile hand had sent it from the bow. Thin parchment leaves were rolled round the shaft, while the point was covered with some wild flowers. She untied the leaves, and did not fail to recognize the handwriting. It was "Waltari's Song." On the first page was written in pale red ink: "A parting salutation for the Duchess of Suabia!" and beside it the words of the apostle James: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

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Then the proud woman inclined her head, and wept bitterly. . . .

Here our story ends.

Ekkehard went out into the wide world, and never set eyes again on the Hohentwiel. Neither did he ever return to the monastery of St. Gall. It is true that when he descended from the Alps and approached the well-known walls, he reflected whether he should not enter it again as a penitent; but at the right moment an adage of the old Master of the Alps occurred to him: "When a man has once been master, he does not like to become a servant again," and so he passed by.

Later, a good deal was talked about a certain Ekkehard at the court of the Saxon emperor, who was said to be a proud, strong-willed, and reserved man; who to great piety united great contempt for the world, but who was satisfied with life, active, and well-versed in all the arts. He became the Emperor's chancellor, and tutor of his young son; and his counsel was of great influence in all the affairs of the realm. One historian reports of him, that by degrees he had risen to so much honor, that there was a rumor that the highest dignity of the Church was awaiting him.

The Empress Adelheid also held him in great esteem; and his influence was one of the chief causes why an army was sent out against the overbearing king of Denmark.

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It has not been ascertained whether this was the Ekkehard of our story.

Others have pretended that there had been several monks of the name of Ekkehard in the monastery of St. Gall, and that he who instructed the Duchess in Latin was not the same who composed Waltari's song.

Those, however, who have attentively read the story which we have now happily brought to a conclusion know better.

About the fate of the others whom our tale has brought before the reader's eye, there is not much left to be told.

The Duchess Hadwig never married again, and in her prayerful widowhood reached a considerable age. Later, she founded a humble little convent on the Hohentwiel, to which she bequeathed her territories in the Allemannic lands.

Ekkehard's name was allowed to be mentioned before her no more, but Waltari's song was read very often, and she evidently derived much pleasure and comfort from it. According to an unauthenticated assertion of the monks from the Reichenau, she is said to have known it almost by heart.

Praxedis faithfully served her mistress for some years more; but by degrees an irresistible longing for her bright, sunny home, took possession of her, so that she declared that she could not bear the Suabian air any longer.

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Richly dowered, the Duchess let her go from her. Master Spazzo, the chamberlain, gave her a gallant and honorable escort as far as Venetia, whence a Greek galley bore the still pretty maiden from the city of St. Mark to Byzantium. The accounts which she gave there of the Bodensee, and the rough but faithful barbarian hearts about its shores, were received by all the waiting-women at the Greek court with a dubious shake of the head, as if she were speaking of a bewitched sea and some fabulous country.

Old Moengal took care of the spiritual welfare of his parishioners for some time longer. When the Huns threatened the land with another invasion, he spent much time in making plans for their reception. He proposed to dig some hundreds of deep pitfalls in the plain, to cover them with boughs and ferns, and behind them, in full battle array, to wait for the enemy, so that horses and riders should thus be frustrated in their wicked designs.

The evil guests, however, did not make their reappearance in the Hegau, and thus robbed the parish priest of the pleasure of splitting their skulls with the mighty blows of his shillalah. A peaceful death overtook the old sportsman, just when he was about to rest after a successful hunt with his falcon. On his grave, in the shadow of his gray parish church, there grew a holly bush.

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which grew higher and more knotty than any which had ever been seen in those parts; and people said that it must be an offspring of their priest's good bludgeon, Cambutta.

Audifax, the goatherd, learned the goldsmith's art, and settled down in the bishopric of Constance, where he produced much fine workmanship. The companion of his adventures there became his wedded wife, and the Duchess was godmother to their first little son.

Burkhard, the cloister pupil, became a celebrated Abbot of the monastery of St. Gallus, and on all great occasions he still manufactured many dozens of learned Latin verses, from which, however, thanks to the destroying powers of time, posterity has been spared.

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And all have long since become dust and ashes. Centuries have passed in swift procession over the places where their fates were fulfilled; and new stories have taken the place of the old.

The Hohentwiel has meanwhile witnessed a good deal during war and peace. Many a brave knight rode out of its gates, and many a prisoner pined in its vaults, until the last hour of the proud fortress struck; for on a fine day in May it was blown to pieces by the enemy, so that towers and walls were scattered into the air.

In the present day 'tis quiet enough on that sum-

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mit. The goats are peacefully grazing among the huge ruins; but from over the glittering Lake of Constance the Sentis still stands out in the blue distance, as grand and beautiful as it did many hundred years ago; and it is still a pleasurable thing, seated in the luxuriant grass, to look out over the land.

He who has written this book has sat up there on many a spring evening, a strange and lonely guest; and the crows and jackdaws would fly tauntingly around him, as if they wanted to mock him because he was so lonely; and they did not notice that a numerous and honorable party was assembled about him. They were all the persons, in fact, whose acquaintance the reader has made in the course of this story; and they told him everything, clearly and distinctly; and they helpfully encouraged him to write everything down, thus enabling them to live again in the memory of a later, hastening age of railways.

And if he has succeeded in calling up before you also, beloved reader, who have patiently followed him till now, a distinct picture of these faded, ancient times, then he considers himself well repaid for his trouble and perplexities. Farewell! And be his friend also in the future!

VOLUME TWO

